University of Alberta

Alienation or ambiguity: Psychology's disciplinary identity and the idealization of personal agency

by

Christopher Peet

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Abstract

This study argues that psychology's attaining to a genuinely scientific status is incumbent upon its capacity to adequately address human experience. Critical assessments of the discipline are unanimous in agreeing that psychology has to date failed to accomplish this aim. The historical roots of this failure are traced to the Enlightenment and the emergence in nineteenth century Germany of the disciplinary order of research that composes the modern university. The organization of intellectual life into disparate disciplines is critically analyzed and, through the manner in which psychology has gained institutional autonomy in the United States in the twentieth century, its disciplinary identity is argued to be the most prominent barrier to psychology's capacity to develop a genuine science of human experience. It is argued that a fundamental alienation of knowledge from life proves to be the very premise for psychological theorizing, and by extension suggested to be the case for the human sciences in general. An expository reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential-phenomenological approach to perception is offered as a corrective and as exemplary of an incipient science of experience; the exposition is accompanied by a critical evaluation of the thesis in light of the problem language raises for his account of perception. Merleau-Ponty's account demonstrates the manner in which psychology as a science of experience can be pursued, as issuing inescapably from a philosophical stance towards its human subject matter and necessarily in terms of human beings as personal agents. Examination and elaboration of the themes of embodiment, expression, and history that are fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's work provides a framework for situating psychology in relation to philosophy as well as the other human sciences, and addresses the discipline's problem of alienation through rooting psychological inquiry within the broader social order and arguing for the existential recognition that this order, and human life in general, be understood as expressive of human agency.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.

Then shall I know, even as also I am known.

dedicated to my brother

Garnet Peet
(1960-1987)

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Merleau-Ponty says that history is other people, and the experience of discovering history a kind of anguish. Whatever there is of truth or wisdom found in the following pages, then, comes out of this kind of anguish, and I want to thank all of you who helped make this possible. All errors and shortcomings, of course, are mine alone.

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Chapter 1. The Enlightenment and the crisis of philosophy

Parameters & focus

In 1890, two years before he assisted in founding the American Psychological Association (APA), William James described the fledgling discipline of psychology:

> A string of raw facts; a little gossip and a wrangle about opinions; a little classification and generalization on the mere descriptive level; a strong prejudice that we have states of mind, and that our brain conditions them: but not a single law in the same sense in which physics shows us laws, not a single proposition from which any consequence can causally be deduced... This is no science, it is only the hope for a science. (1890/1950, p. 335)

Since then, psychology as an independent research discipline has become firmly ensconced in the university as a respectable field; the APA has grown from its initial membership of forty-two members to over one hundred and fifty thousand, the majority of whom are professional practitioners; and as evident in the mass media, numerous institutions, and everyday parlance, psychology exercises notable influence in the Western world as a popular and highly visible figure on the contemporary social landscape.[1] From society's point of view, and indeed for psychologists themselves, psychology clearly has a well-established disciplinary identity. But this is not because James' hope for a science has been fulfilled. One hundred years later former APA President George Miller (1985) offered his synopsis of psychology in the retrospective volume *A century of psychology as science*:

> Obviously, no standard method or technique integrates the field. Nor does there seem to be any fundamental scientific principle comparable to Newton's laws of motion or Darwin's theory of evolution. There is not even

> any universally accepted criterion of explanation. What is the binding force? When reason fails, one resorts to faith. …I believe the common denominator is a faith that somehow, someday, someone will create a science of immediate experience. (p. 42)

Relative to James' comments, this is not a new description but an uncanny repetition. Numerous other contributors to the volume echo the opinion. In fact throughout the short history of psychology it is voiced so repeatedly as to be better described as a tired refrain or an unremarkable commonplace. But it is worth remarking, and demands a serious and thorough evaluation. For over the course of merely a century psychology, whether as a research discipline or as a professional practice, has become entrenched in modern society and the modern university. In terms of its scientific status, however – which presumably ought to define the discipline – it has 'progressed' from hope to faith. That is, as a science, psychology has made no progress at all. This peculiar state of affairs summarizes, in a nutshell, the basic parameters and central focus of the following study. One parameter is the relation between psychology and society; a second, the successful establishment of psychology's disciplinary identity; the third, psychology's lack of progress as a science. These parameters sketch, in broad outline, the limiting concerns of my argument. At their center, I am focussed on that problematic hub about which they are situated and which best throws those broad parameters into relief: creating a psychology that is "a science of experience", which I understand to be the *constitutive problem* of the discipline. Experience, regardless of whether it is understood as "immediate" or not, has proven to be that most elusive and baneful of phenomena for psychology, a sort of Holy Grail for adventurous investigators. It is

my contention in this study that psychology's continuing failure to attain genuinely scientific status is indissolubly linked to its incapacity to deal with experience.

These broad parameters just sketched as well as psychology's constitutive problem as a discipline necessarily involve historical considerations, either in the weak sense of outlining the setting and development for these issues or in the strong sense of history being essential to the discipline itself (and/or to experience itself). Psychology's aspiration to science understood as a natural science has promoted an ahistorical outlook in terms of a *naturalistic* conception of scientific practice *and* of its subject matter. I contest this naturalistic orientation and advocate understanding psychology as a human science in a manner akin to, for example, Amedeo Giorgi's (1970) proposal, wherein the basic issues that are at stake between a natural versus human science approach are presented in a cogent manner that is still mostly applicable today (for a more recent treatment, see Polkinghorne, 1983; 1988). Over and above my agreement on fundamental issues, however, there is a significant difference in our emphases. Giorgi (1970) utilizes history in the weak sense of providing introductory background as a critical resource for his proposal, whereas I take it in the strong sense as essential to the constitution of both psychology as a human science as well as its subject matter of human experience. I hope to substantiate this position on history through the evidence and argument presented in this study, and subsequently a strong and significant tension between history and nature runs throughout this study in terms of which should serve as the scientific basis for the discipline. Since this tension is significant, I will elaborate it through

an example and draw out four themes that compose this tension and which are crucial to this study.

As part of a broader, cross-disciplinary historiographic trend, histories of psychology since the late 1960s have moved from what Herbert Butterfield dubbed "Whig histories" (1951), which were insider accounts of the discipline which rationalized the past in self-justifying terms of present practice such as E. G. Boring's (1929/1950) classic *A history of experimental psychology*, to more critical examinations of psychology within its social context such as Kurt Danziger's (1990) *Constructing the subject*. Boring (1929/1950) argues that experimental psychology revealed "the generalized, human, normal, adult mind" (p. x) in the laboratory and that the discipline had made some degree of progress over its half century of existence. Danziger (1990) on the other hand argues that what is revealed in the laboratory is the product of social interactions and relations embedded within the investigative context and therefore conclusions as to the mind's 'nature' are suspended and the 'progress' of experimental psychology criticized.

Whether one agrees with Danziger or not, a first theme evident here is that history puts the category of nature into question and therefore also puts the self-conception of psychology as a natural science discipline into question. A second theme follows from the first. Questions as to the nature of a subject matter, the nature of a discipline, or their relation cannot be settled by the tests or methods of the discipline without begging those questions. The possibility of treating these questions at all or

to evaluate an account like Boring's or Danziger's requires some higher-order theoretical account, which I understand to mean that a human science always issues from a philosophy. A third theme stems from the potential historicism any historical undertaking implies. Relative to Boring's naturalistic assumptions about the human mind, his account of the progress of experimental psychology presumably holds. Relative to Danziger's constructionist assumptions about scientific knowledge claims being to an unascertained degree the products of inherently social, relational, and discursive practices, his critique of naturalism and progress presumably holds. If Boring's and Danziger's assumptions are apposite to their particular historical periods while each account holds relative to those respective assumptions, to compare or judge them requires recourse again to a higher-order account. This could be considered a methodological problem of historiography, except that adjudicating between different historical periods within an emerging science when an evaluation of progress (or lack of it) is at stake requires considerations beyond methodology. At least within the history of science, to do historiography assumes a philosophy of history. A fourth theme falls out from this last point and was well illustrated by the psychologist Danziger's historiography being, as noted, part of a broader cross-disciplinary trend. If historiography is never merely a methodological problem but always involves a philosophy of history and if, as I argue, history is crucial to psychology and the human sciences, then it follows that history is necessarily cross-disciplinary. This is perhaps not a controversial conclusion, but the implication is: the human sciences are not to be understood as insulated, self-contained disciplines but as overlapping and encroaching each upon the other while

any particular human science discipline is inescapably 'inter-disciplinary'. In brief, to recognize history as essential to psychology as a human science raises an acute tension between history and nature as the scientific basis for the discipline. This tension can be summarized in four themes: 1) history puts the nature of psychology's subject matter and self-conception into question, 2) opens psychology to philosophy, 3) opens the historiography of psychology to the philosophy of history, and 4) connects psychology in nontrivial ways to the other human sciences. Putting the recognition of history, philosophy, philosophy of history, and the inter-disciplinarity of the human sciences together, the immediate historiographic implication that falls out for psychology (and presumably, for the other human sciences) is that the debate of whether the history of the discipline should be internal or external is not radical enough. The issue is rather, can there be an 'autonomous' discipline of psychology at all? If so, on what grounds, and what precisely would 'autonomy' entail?

I approach psychology's constitutive problem of creating a science of experience from these assumptions that open (or arguably, re-open) the discipline to history and philosophy, and put the identity and very existence of psychology as a discipline at stake. From this point of view it is especially significant that neither psychology's failure to attain genuinely scientific status nor its incapacity to deal with experience have impeded its success in gaining acceptance by society as well as disciplinary independence in the academy. From the inside, the question of psychology's independent disciplinary identity is inseparable from its attainment of

scientific status: the discipline gains or earns its independent status because its scientific achievements are recognized. However, from the outside these two aims are separable. Legitimating itself within society and gaining independence within the institutional infrastructure of the university system are the primary problems facing psychology at its inception and only secondarily its scientific status. I argue that a convincing case can be made for the crucial relatedness between psychology's failure and incapacity to gain scientific status on the one hand and, on the other, its success in gaining acceptance and independence in society and in the academy. To make this case requires more than an internal or external analysis of the discipline *per se*, but involves a historical examination of the very emergence of 'disciplinarity', which is to attempt to recognize and articulate the philosophical significance of 'the disciplines' both intellectually as a knowledge stance as well as practically as a particular social organization and institutionalization of intellectual life. Therefore this chapter and the following examine the historical and institutional context, understood in terms of their social and intellectual aspects, that instates the modern disciplinary order of research *preceding* psychology's inception as a particular discipline. Once this background has been established, psychology as an autonomous discipline defined by its own practical order of research will be analyzed, setting the stage for consideration of the problem of creating a science of experience.

Founding considerations: putting the inception of psychology into context

The intent of this chapter and the following to examine the historical and institutional context that instates the modern disciplinary order of research needs

some elaboration. The usual history of psychology begins with Wundt's establishing the Leipzig psychological laboratory in 1879 as the starting point, or perhaps the 1860 publication of Fechner's *Elements of Psychophysics*, or possibly even the 1892 founding of the APA (again, see Boring, 1929/1950; also Littman, 1979). While factually these choices can be justified the point would seem to be how to understand the events in more than the terms of their figures, dates and locations. Sigmund Koch, who made a career spanning four decades of painstaking assessment of the discipline highlighted by his editing of the multi-volume overview of the field *Psychology: a study of a science* (Koch, 1959-1963) and co-editing of *A century of psychology as science* (Koch & Leary, 1985), and who has probably been the most qualified, persistent, and long-standing internal critic of psychology, offers a "key" to psychology's history. Like William James and George Miller, Koch's concern as a psychologist has been with the discipline's aspirations and failure to achieve scientific status, and his critical efforts have aimed to separate the rhetoric of psychology's promoters from its actual achievements in order to undertake a genuine inquiry into the conditions of its failure. Koch (1999) finds these conditions to be not only present from psychology's inception in the late nineteenth century, but in fact dependent upon the peculiarities of its being "stipulated into life".[2]

> At the time of its inception, psychology was unique in the extent to which its institutionalization preceded its content and its methods preceded its problems. If there are keys to history, this statement is surely a key to the history of modern psychology. (p. 125)

Koch is overstating the case regarding psychology's uniqueness, as other social sciences and research fields share these features at their founding (Haskell, 1977;

Manicas, 1987; Ross, 1991), and to some extent this "key" fits the locks to their history, too. However, the description does hold relative to the natural sciences. For although the natural and social sciences were being instituted as independent research disciplines of the modern university at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany, and following its example in the United States as well, the crucial difference between them was the long historical development of the natural sciences (Nye, 1996; Price, 1975; Shapin, 1996). The most venerable of these, physics, stemmed from centuries of tradition of gentlemen scholars that reached a spectacular apex during the Enlightenment, showed no signs of dissipation, and was associated with luminaries such as Galileo, Newton, and Laplace. Chemistry had produced its Lavoisier, Berzelius, Liebig, and Mendeleev; and newest on the scene, physiology and biology had emerged in the nineteenth century as vigorous fields in their own right through representation by scientists as esteemed as Johannes Müller, du Bois-Reymond, and Helmholtz, prior to the extraordinary impact of Darwin's evolutionary theory. The institutionalization of these sciences was a confirmation of their progressive achievements and a welcome stage in their development.

Psychology and the other newly-emerging social sciences took advantage of these widespread institutional changes. However, lacking the history of the natural sciences necessitated that these new sciences invent themselves. There was no question that science was to be understood in epistemological terms while with rare exceptions (e.g., Dilthey's 1883 *Introduction to the human sciences* (1923/1988)) the general consensus was that the model of science was natural science. What was in question was just how to conceive of the model and how stringently to adhere to

its conception. The irony of the ahistorical orientation of the natural science model is that it overlooks the obvious possibility: that it might be precisely the long history of the natural sciences that was essential to their present form and to their success.

The epistemological and methodological questions as to the nature of science were debated with fervor in late nineteenth century Germany (Ermarth, 1978; Kusch, 1995).[3] The debate continues to the present day, as reflected in the transformations of the philosophy of science in the twentieth century, from the positivism of Mach and Avenarius, to the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, to the Popper-Kuhn debate, and to the explosion in historical and sociological studies of science. Psychologists have been attentive to the debate, not least to ensure that their conception of the discipline corresponded to the dominant version of science of the philosophers. This results in the history of psychology being "very much a history of changing views, doctrines, images, about what to emulate in the natural sciences" (Koch, 1999, p. 244), and puts the lie to any claim that psychology has emancipated itself from philosophy. In terms of psychology's self-conception as a science, then, it is most accurate to say that it has not had *one*. Rather, it has joined, and continues to participate, in an active philosophical debate wherein one constant has been its ahistorical outlook. That this outlook was initially held is not surprising as the epistemology setting the terms for the debate was modeled on the natural sciences. However what is striking is the *perseverance* of this outlook over the long term, a fact that suggests it has had broader social and institutional support in addition to its theoretical rationale.

The disciplinary arrangement of modern universities as they emerged in Germany and the United States provided this social and institutional support and in this regard the peculiarly modern interpenetration of the state with the educational system becomes a crucial factor. Consequently, considerations of the institutionalization and legitimation of a modern research discipline in terms of its historical development will necessarily invoke the developing nation-state as context and corollary since the specific development each follows is inconceivable without the other (Wagner & Wittrock, 1991). Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, the gaining of disciplinary autonomy and the increasing importance of education and research were tied to prospects of nation-building as components of the same process.

There is no doubt a marked discontinuity between the German and American contexts.[4] From psychology's point of view, perhaps the fundamental difference resides in its emergence in Germany as a possibility at the center of a long-standing debate concerning the role of philosophy within an established institutional infrastructure, whereas it enters the post-Civil War American scene as one of many hopeful new sciences and professions that represent the 'progressivist' promise of re-ordering the country wholesale (Bledstein, 1976; Haber, 1964; Kloppenberg, 1986; Ross, 1991; Wiebe, 1967). In Germany, Humboldt's founding the Berlin University in 1809 placed research on an equal footing with teaching, established philosophy as the highest faculty, formalized the principle of academic freedom

from social interference, and set the stage for a university system that became the envy of the rest of the world (Paulsen, 1906). It also unintentionally set in motion a dynamic pattern of "disciplinary diffusion" (Ben-David & Zloczower, 1962) whereby a research community – usually a single chair with a number of students – would assert a distinctive identity through monopolizing a newly-emerging field, a process of differentiation that always took place *within philosophy*. This process was one of dynamic growth insofar as there was room for expansion internal to the German institutional infrastructure, and constrained insofar as the infrastructure depended on the state. For the institutionalization of psychology in Germany the consequence was that the question of its disciplinary autonomy emerges later rather than earlier.

On the other hand, in the post-Civil War American educational context the multi-faceted process of establishing a modern university system, the ideals of academic freedom, and the question of disciplinary autonomy (as based on the German model and initiated with the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876) develop together with these numerous facets all simultaneously at the forefront (Manicas, 1987). Psychology does not develop within philosophy as part of an established, state-supported institutional infrastructure guaranteed freedom from social demands, rather it participates in establishing the American institutional infrastructure. In so doing psychology finds itself caught between the German science ideal of freedom for research, the state from which it must earn its freedom, and the social demand that it prove its worth. This entails a sociopolitical and

institutional process of a very different complexity from what occurred in Germany (Flexner, 1930; Hoftsadter & Metzger, 1955). One clear result of these differences is that "psychology as an autonomous discipline is an American and not a German invention" (Danziger, 1979, p. 32). This applies to many of the other modern disciplines as well. Manicas (1987) notes the "important fact" that "the familiar disciplinary divisions of the social sciences as they are now institutionalized in the modern university" in terms of an independent departmental structure was "given its present form in the American university system" (p. 193). In marked contrast to a positivist historiography which would interpret psychology's move from Germany to America in terms of a linear progress judged by contemporary norms, emphasizing the discontinuities in this displacement is an important corrective.

What both the positivist and the critical historiographic rationales share in arguing for their respective positions with regard to the emergence of psychology as an autonomous discipline is a discipline-centered interest that simply assumes the institutional background in which multiple disciplines emerge. They do not raise philosophical questions about the social and historical significance of the institutionalizing of multi-disciplinary approaches to knowledge, but take this multi-disciplinary institutionalization for granted. I understand this limitation as reflecting the historiographer's own discipline-specific situation, set against the multi-disciplinary background of the modern academy. The constitutive problem of any new discipline is understood in terms of the discipline it founds and the future history it initiates, making the problem 'academic' in the pejorative sense, rather

than understanding the problem in the broader terms of the disciplinary arrangement it consolidates or of the particular history it expresses. It is my argument that these broader terms, which do not respect disciplinary boundaries nor presuppose as given an institutionalized multi-disciplinary background, are necessarily philosophical. Hidden within the institutionalized disciplinary arrangement that the constitutive problem of a particular discipline presupposes is a deeper 'constitutive problem' that emerges from the crisis of philosophy in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century (Taylor, 1975).

The crisis of philosophy: the constitutive problem of unity

To overcome a discipline-specific reading of history as well as an unexamined assumption of 'disciplinarity' and its effects requires a retrieval of the philosophical significance of the institutionalized disciplinary arrangement and of the particular history it expresses, as embodied in the university system. Retrieval of this significance will situate the modern order of intellectual life within the broader stream of European history and philosophy. Subsequently, the constitutive problem of a particular discipline (such as psychology's problem of creating a science of experience) will not be conceptualized as either an exclusively discipline-specific issue or a merely academic interest. Instead a discipline's constitutive problem will be understood as expressing, in a highly condensed form, a particular configuration of issues presumably of deep concern to the modern social order and rooted in its history.[5]

Applying this philosophical questioning of disciplinarity to psychology broadens the scope for understanding the constitutive problem of psychology considerably. The discontinuities between psychology's emergence within philosophy in Germany and its institutionalization as an autonomous discipline in the United States become understood against a broader background, that of American research disciplines being themselves adapted from the "German academic pattern" (Herbst, 1965). This academic pattern is the institutionalized outcome to the social transformation of intellectual life engendered by, and as a response to, the crisis of philosophy in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. Psychology's movement from its inception in Germany to its institutionalization in America can be understood as a subset of this social transformation of intellectual life. Put into these terms, for psychology's self-understanding as a science and as a research discipline as well as its practical institutionalization through a process of self-legitimation to gain their full significance they need to be situated within a broader context of educational change inseparable from the crisis of philosophy. In terms of setting historical parameters the broader social and institutional background that situates psychology's inception as a discipline – Koch's "key" to the history of psychology – traces its origins back to the western European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and culminates in the crisis of philosophy at the turn of the nineteenth century before emerging in Germany through achieving a certain dynamic resolution called "research" by approximately 1830 (Turner, 1987).

The hinge on which this historical interpretation swings is that of the well-worn notion of an acute crisis of philosophy at the end of the eighteenth century. There are numerous contributors to the crisis. In intellectual circles, the success of the Enlightenment movement had created an unprecedented flood of facts and findings and a corresponding proliferation of publications, journals, theories and philosophical perspectives. This flood raises the demand for some *unified account* that would exonerate Reason's claim to universality, consistency, and coherence. This demand for unity was sharpened acutely by the conflict of the conservative forces of religion and tradition with the more radical and virulent strands of Enlightenment that were explicitly anti-religious (Gay, 1966). Scholastic accounts of a cosmic unity in Aristotelian terms struggled to retain their respectability in the face of powerful opposition from a wide gamut of philosophies (empiricist, materialist, skeptical, and so on). Charles Taylor (1975) argues the crisis "concerned the nature of human subjectivity and its relation to the world" in terms of "a problem of uniting two seemingly indispensable images of man" (p. 3).[6] The crisis was further exacerbated and was lent a powerful sense of urgency in the face of dramatic social change. The drastic transformation of Britain through industrialization had begun in the last half of the eighteenth century while the bloody excesses and violence of the French Revolution in the name of Enlightenment ideals gave European intellectuals pause and presumably would have been perceived as threatening the stability and integrity of established social systems outside France.

In brief, I interpret the crisis of philosophy as raising the problem of establishing some kind of unity that would address the fragmentation, volatility, and upheaval that characterized intellectual and social life at the end of the eighteenth century. The demand for unity was construed variously as uniting the disparate and fragmented state of knowledge created by the many new sciences, or of grounding reason in a sure foundation that would adjudicate conflicting opinions, or of reconciling nature and freedom, or of harmonizing society through applying science, and so on (cf. Cassirer, 1932/1951; Taylor, 1975, pp. 3-126). I argue that the concerted efforts of numerous thinkers coalesce around this problem of unity and in this sense of constituting the center of gravity of their efforts, can justifiably be designated the *constitutive problem* for philosophy at that time. Collectively their concerted efforts bring about a particular historical resolution that, regardless of whether it is considered to have solved the problem of unity or to have driven the problem deeper, has in retrospect proven of extraordinary consequence. This conclusion is as well-established as the notion of philosophy's crisis is well-worn. The historian of science, Steven Turner (1987), writes:

> No proposition in the historiography of science has received more *universal* assent or so defied precise formulation than the claim that between 1775 and 1830 the sciences underwent a revolutionary change – a "great transition". It is asserted that this "great transition" altered their content and practice more radically than any comparable event since the seventeenth century and left them in a *distinctly modern form* that has persisted into the late twentieth century. (p. 56; emphases mine.)

Outside the historiography of science there has been further assent to this postulate of a "great transition" by thinkers as diverse as Ernst Cassirer (1950), Michel Foucault (1966/1970; 1975/1979), Jürgen Habermas (1968/1971), Eric Hobsbawm

(1990), and Charles Taylor (1975). The surprising appellation "universal" subsequently takes on a broader and deeper significance beyond the history of science, and analogously the importance of the "distinctly modern form" of the sciences that achieves its specific crystallization by the 1830s extends more broadly and deeply as well. Turner (1986) citing Rudolf Stichweh aptly calls this crystallization a "disciplinary order", by which he means the disciplinary arrangement of research communities oriented around particular knowledge fields that we are familiar with today. To recover the philosophical significance of the disciplinary order of research that composes the institutional backdrop to both the emergence of psychology as an autonomous discipline and to contemporary intellectual life entails first that the problem of unity that emerged from the crisis of philosophy and which this disciplinary order purportedly addresses be adequately outlined. The remainder of this chapter aims to achieve this through a tendentious reading (that is, from the point of view of the eventual emergence of the disciplinary order of research) of the antecedents to philosophy's constitutive problem of unity within the social and intellectual history of the Enlightenment.

To underscore the tendentiousness of this reading of the signal importance of the "disciplinary order" of research, the irony and incongruity of its emergence in a period of educational reform in a collection of semi-feudal German principalities at the turn of the nineteenth century should be emphasized. For the socioeconomic transformation ongoing in Britain at the time that was the Industrial Revolution (ca. 1750-1830), the precipitous politics of the French Revolution catalyzed by the

events of 1789, or even the colonial drama of the American Revolution of 1776 which proves historically decisive in retrospect, are more sensational candidates. However, since the volatile mixture of industry, politics, and knowledge as fused into a revolutionary synthesis within the crucible of institutional change within the German university system proves to manifest implications in every sphere of life which were (and continue to be) decisively realized in the United States in a manner that has become globally influential justifies this otherwise incongruous historiographic choice. The sociologist of science Joseph Ben-David (1971) has shown how the precedents for this institutional change and its constitutive features derived from the program of educational reform are to be found in the distinctiveness of Germany's socioeconomic and political structure (in contrast to that of France or Britain). Ben-David's comparative analysis outlines a framework which highlights the specific social-historical contribution to the emergence of the disciplinary order and subsequently his interpretation provides the outline to the following section.

Enlightenment antecedents: Revolution & reform in France, Britain & Germany

Germany along with France and the rest of continental Europe lagged behind Britain as the latter industrialized at a prodigious rate from the middle of the eighteenth century. Landes (1969) notes that by 1850 "[t]his little island, with a population half that of France, was turning out about two-thirds of the world's coal, more than half of its iron and cotton cloth" (p. 124).[7] Reasons for this lag on the continent are numerous, complex, and contested (Britain's sea-going capacities due

to its island status, its colonies, its road system, and the invention of the steam engine, etc. (see Landes, 1969, pp. 124-192)), but do not concern us here. Rather the significance of the difference it points up with reference to Germany does. The latter was administratively, politically, and religiously a highly differentiated "patchwork of kingdoms, archduchies, duchies, bishoprics, principalities, free cities, and other forms of sovereignty, each with its own laws, courts, coinage and, above all, customs barriers" (Landes, 1969, p. 127). This patchwork was mostly landlocked, obstructing the development of overseas colonial possibilities that were such an integral aspect of other European economies. Due to the restricted scope of its control political authority throughout these principalities could remain effective in a quasi-feudal form vested in a ruling elite of aristocracy and nobility administered by small cadres of professional civil servants provided through the particular university for that locality. This traditional arrangement maintained a social structure that was resistant to change and possessed strictly traditional opportunities for upward mobility and little or no opportunity for social change, contributing to the mostly correct perception of a pre-unity Germany as conservative, backward, and inward-looking (McClelland, 1980). Further, the decentralized and bounded nature of a multiplicity of German principalities prevented the development of an influential middle class or the establishment of a coherent basis for any broad-based social class with progressive aims (Ben-David, 1971, pp. 108-116). While these features severely retarded its industrial development, they also distinguish Germany from the unified polities of Britain and

France where middle and mobile class structures were an essential component of their internal differentiation.

This distinction between Germany's social conservatism and the progressive possibilities internal to France and Britain is prominent when set against the backdrop of the Enlightenment (for which I am adopting the periodicization of 1689-1789 as appropriate, following Peter Gay (1966)). The presence or absence of the capacity to realize the revolutionary ideals that define the Enlightenment movement mediates the roles and perceptions of the intellectual elites of the respective nations accordingly. The revolutionary ideals of freedom, equality, justice, etc., and the notions of mobility, progress, reform, or change, that motivate and define the Enlightenment in Britain and France involve a demand for greater liberty in a context where tradition as represented by the secular State authority and the Church comes to be viewed as increasingly restrictive, oppressive, authoritarian, and unjust. Consequently British and French intellectuals shun the institutions supported by tradition and solicit the assistance of influential, progressively minded social classes that exerted power outside the traditional channels controlled by the Church and the State. In contrast the situation of German intellectuals entailed that any demand for freedom, as circumscribed by their patronage and possibilities, be unsatisfactorily restricted to the politically conservative institutions of the courts, the academies, or the universities.

In Britain and France, the intellectuals and *philosophes* derided and distanced themselves from the universities and the established educational institutions. These institutions trained a professional elite and understood teaching as the transmission of tradition and were dominated, particularly in France, by the ecclesiastical authority that sustained the medieval tradition of corporate autonomy (Le Goff, 1957/1993). Philosophy at the university was correspondingly conservative. Whether the philosophical orientation was scholastic (in a Catholic context) or classical-humanistic (in a Protestant setting) teaching was defined by the reproduction of traditional interpretations of texts, the study of Latin, and rote learning of a traditional curriculum. Rejecting this option, the Enlightenment thinkers utilized royal academies and societies, local academies, salons, coffee houses, literary clubs, libraries, and like forms of organization for their intellectual contexts and systems of communication, while enjoying and cultivating the patronage of precisely the sort of wealthy or influential social classes interested in societal change that the German states lacked (Im Hof, 1994, pp. 105-54). Extant social structure was such that in both countries the intellectuals were members of these classes that possessed some means, or access to means, to effect social change (Ben-David, 1971, pp. 75-107). In Britain, they "participated in government directly", whereas "in France they exerted influence through the intermediary of some civil servants but were usually frustrated by the government" (Ben-David, 1971, p. 84). Social change manifested in the former through progressive reform of existing institutions, in the latter through instating revolutionary institutions. The

different manifestations in the two countries derive from numerous factors, with the most prominent being religious-political.

The British system that maintained a *distributed* political power through the monarchy, the Parliamentary houses, and its legal tradition, worked in tandem through its Protestant culture to rationalize its own functions in a manner that promoted a *secular* treatment of a plurality of interests (Ben-David, 1971). A corollary to this process of rationalizing its functions was an increased growth in science and its perceived status, both intellectually and socially, as another means for an amicable distribution of power was established (without jeopardizing the class structure, as the scientists were invariably gentlemen) and conflict was diverted from the violent and schismatic potential it had when conducted under religious auspices. These developments were due to neither an openness essential to Protestantism over Catholicism, nor any intrinsic connection between a secular view of things and science. Rather, it is the case that in the historical wake of the numerous revolutions and conflicts of the Reformation and Counter-reformation, altering the monopoly of control over certain domains traditionally held on religious authority through secularizing them proved effective for recognizing and addressing a plurality of interests and maintaining a balance of power (struck between a Protestantized Christianity and secular political governance) that was constantly under threat. This interpretation of the relations between Protestantism, secularization, and science is not identical to "the Merton thesis" which postulates that the Puritan ethos of Britain fertilized scientific growth (Merton, 1938/1970;

Cohen, 1990), but a corollary of it: the Protestant interpretive outlook – not in its essence but in precisely its differentiation of the Catholic tradition – opened a secularized, or more precisely 'secularize-able', space for a plurality of dissenting views that moderated their potential for conflict and in so doing raised a practicable notion of tolerance. Scientific work was well-favored to insert itself into that space, an opportunity which progressively minded intellectuals exploited.

The radicalization and virulence of the French Enlightenment – as well as the more abstract and intellectual content of their philosophy relative to the British – had everything to do with the tripartite hold on power exerted by the combination of the near-absoluteness of the monarchy, the monopoly of the Catholic church, and educational institutions as ecclesiastical corporate associations charged with the transmission of tradition. Those social classes that desired progressive change and the *philosophes* whom they patronized that appealed to science to secure epistemological warrant for such change had to do so in the face of the formidable strength of this tripartite authority. Ben-David (1971) remarks:

> France was in many ways ruled in an even more traditional manner than Prussian and other German lands. Religious pluralism was not officially tolerated, invidious distinctions of status and rank were officially bolstered, and attempts at social reforms had to stop short at sacrosanct traditional prerogatives. (p. 91)

As a result there is increasing disaffection and alienation, and the intellectual opposition to tradition becomes more and more markedly and stridently anti-Christian. Peter Gay (1966) distinguishes an early and a later period within the Enlightenment marked precisely by the transition from the *philosophes* mostly

affirmative relation to Christianity to its violent rejection. Charles Taylor (1989, Ch. 18) cautiously untangles the particulars of the dynamics of secularization, arguing that the transition effected during the Enlightenment was from a theism without which "moral sources" were inconceivable, to the "opening of other possible sources" with a strong moral appeal quite outside any conception of God. Clearly, "Nature" proves the preferred alternative moral source, the Nature belonging to natural philosophy and science.

The Enlightenment thinkers were tireless propagandists and populists in promoting natural science as the most progressive model for social and political transformation. As Cassirer (1932/1951) convincingly demonstrates, the philosophy of the Enlightenment was above all a systematic attempt to extend Newtonian-style mechanics into human domains of psychology, religion, history, law and society, and aesthetics. This extension was not a question of "applying" a "pure" science to practical spheres but of realizing the reason immanent in these spheres as Newton had done for physics. For the *philosophes*, who are for the most part more accurately described as scientistic rather than themselves scientists, science's empirical claims about nature or stress on mathematical reason (the dominant interpretations of science in Britain and France, respectively) represented a *nontraditional authority* to appeal for evidence, proof, and justification, over against the self-legitimating arguments from tradition invoked by the ruling aristocracy and monarchy on one hand and the dogmatic scholars of the church on the other. The English initially perceived this contribution of science as providing

the model for, if not the resolution, then at least the proper conduct of disputes about truth. Initially experimental science served as a model in Baconian terms of a presumed 'value-neutral' method providing, as Ben-David (1971) puts it, "the paradigm for the philosophy of an open and plural society" (p. 74). Later, upon its being institutionalized in 1660 as the Royal Society, Robert Boyle characterized the experimental community as a society exemplifying the solution to what Shapin and Schaffer (1985) call "the problem of order" (see also Ezrahi, 1980). This eminently practical understanding, fostered and fertilized within Britain's Protestant culture of this-worldly industriousness, was particularly formative for experimentally-minded gentlemen, and more generally engendered a utilitarian ethos for engineering and entrepreneurial applications that composed a "scientific culture" at a societal level which seeded the rise of industry in the eighteenth century (Jacob, 1997). Newton's achievements deepened and consolidated the case for natural science and gave it a far-reaching promise and a new intellectual ground that replaced a Baconian conception of science (which had been descriptively inaccurate but rhetorically effective). The empiricists, most notably Locke, take advantage of this promise and extend Newtonian-style thinking into 'mental philosophy', which was understood as a template for social and political reform (Danziger, 1997).

For the French, however, natural science in its Newtonian formulation allowed them to clarify, correct and expand their Cartesian premises. Unlike the English interest in experiment as a political model, the French emphasize Newton's rational side, that is his mathematics. This emphasis stems in part from the French

establishment of the *Académie des sciences* in Paris in 1666 having been from the start a government-sponsored institution, preserving rather than altering the traditional hierarchy of authority through the monarchy's attempt to harness the technical expertise of science for economic and military purposes (Ben-David, 1971, pp. 80-3). However the *philosophes,* operating outside the traditional circuits of power utilize Newtonian science in its representing universal reason as the grounds for revolution as well as the justification for the violence required for the overthrow of traditional authority. "The propagandists of the Enlightenment were French, but its patron saints and pioneers were British... British empiricism transformed French rationalism; French scientific and political propaganda transformed Europe" (Gay, 1967, pp. 11, 13).

Most spectacularly this vision of a new order inspired by natural science manifests in the Revolution itself, but also in the instituting throughout the 1790s of a new educational and scientific structure, the most visible representatives of which were the *grandes écoles*, led by the *École Polytechnique*. These schools, especially the latter, were secular institutions of scientific research and teaching that set new standards for knowledge, investigative technique, and specialization. They represented the high point in the French displacement of British dominance of science that had been in process throughout the eighteenth century, and became the paradigm for experimental laboratory study for the first decades of the nineteenth century (Ben-David, 1971, pp. 94-103).[8] The revolutionary institution of the Paris *école* becomes an important model for the German research system and instigator of

the latter's tensions, as the technical training and utilitarian emphasis of French experimental science were antithetical to the German educational ideology of *Wissenschaft*. Prior to the 1830s, which marked the end of the hegemony of idealism in German philosophy, German natural scientists will take the pilgrimage to Paris to study in its world-renowned laboratories before stealing back into the hostile ethos of the German university system bearing in Promethean fashion what they consider the true light of knowledge, the experimental method.

The ideal of freedom: self-defining subjectivity

The crucial center of gravity that captures many of the concerns brought to the fore in this social-historical analysis of the Enlightenment is the ideal of freedom. The trio of related terms of nature, science, and secularization were all emphasized as representing nontraditional sources legitimating ideals of progressive social change, above all that of freedom. This analysis was undertaken without discussion of the thematic content of that ideal. Charles Taylor (1989) traces the development of the western conception of the self in terms of its moral sources and in doing so provides a powerful interpretive framework for understanding the Enlightenment ideal of freedom.

Taylor argues that Augustine's understanding of the self as essentially inward, as an inner self-presence wherein one knows or communes with God who grounds this self-presence, was "epoch-making" relative to the Greek notion of the self in that "the route to the higher passes within" (1989, p. 139). This understanding is transposed by Descartes and adumbrated by his Enlightenment successors such that

not only the route, but that which is "higher", also becomes inner. "Descartes situates the moral sources within us" (1989, p. 143). This transposition is in turn epoch-making in that it opens an alternate (that is, modern) understanding of the place of human being within the cosmos that affords what Taylor throughout his writings dubs the "radical freedom" of the "self-defining subject". The difference this transposition effects is one of "disengaging" the subject from the cosmic order. Taylor (1975) writes "the essential difference can perhaps be put in this way: the modern subject is self-defining, where on previous views the subject is defined in relation to a cosmic order" (p. 6). On the Augustinian (and Greek) conception, the cosmos is a hierarchical order of meaning. Analogies, relations, and correspondences are all intrinsically significant as they are part of a meaningfully interconnected whole whose ideal unity they express. The rationality that guarantees the knowledge one obtains in one's own inner self-presence is constituted by, or only comes to be rational through, this cosmic order. To contemplate the order of things is knowledge. However, on the modern conception, which does not emerge full-blown with Descartes but gradually articulates its implications over time, the cosmos has been split, as it were, into components whose relation is not subsumed into a singular hierarchy of meaning of the whole, for the rationality of its order and the guarantee of the subject's knowledge prove to depend on the subject. The subject's exercise of reason, by which one orders one's passions, one's knowledge, and the outside world (which includes one's body) is, to use Taylor's favored phrase, self-defining.[9]

Taylor (1975) argues that the ancient conception of knowledge as contemplation and reason as a harmonizing in accord with a fixed order of things were apposite insofar as the practical effectiveness of action and theory was minimal. Progress in scientific explanation and improvements in experimental technique enhance, at least among those intellectuals, the perceived practical effectiveness of knowledge and reason, which brings about a series of changes as evident in the modern revision of the cosmos and in the modern understanding of nature, rationality, the subject, and knowledge.

> [T]he modern certainty that the world was not to be seen as a text or an embodiment of meaning… grew with the mapping of the regularities in things, by transparent mathematical reasoning, and with the consequent increase of manipulative control. That is what ultimately established the picture of the world as the locus of neutral, contingent correlations. (p. 7)

The intellectual breakthroughs of the Scientific Revolution, and increased attention to empirical practice, refinement of instrumentation, and greater social support and interest in science, ushered in a changing conception of knowledge and reason. Its active and constructive capacity was emphasized, and the notion that reason depended on the subject became increasingly plausible as possibilities of control improved. Along with this increase in the perceived power of the subject comes, in the phrase Max Weber made famous, the "disenchantment of the world"; the cosmos loses its fixed hierarchical order and gives way to the modern conception of an objective nature – *the idealization of Nature* – which is not inherently meaningful. Taylor (1975) summarizes the modern disenchanted conception of Nature:

> The new notion of objectivity rejected the recourse to final causes, it was mechanistic in the sense of relying on efficient causation only. Connected

> with this it was atomistic, in that it accounted for change in complex things not by gestalt or holistic properties, but rather by efficient causal relations among constituents. It tended towards homogeneity in that seemingly qualitatively distinct things were to be explained as alternative constructions out of these basic constituents or basic principles. (p. 10)

Along with this notion of the natural world as mechanistic, atomistic, and homogeneous, the conception of the subject (and of reason with which this conception is always already intertwined) had to change as well. The cosmic order becomes radically split as the reasoning subject disengages from a world that is no longer a cosmos but 'Nature'. The domain of consciousness and ideation is in no way to be attributed to nature, as it had previously been attributed to the cosmic order, but rather requires the subject's detachment from the natural world and retreat to the inner mental world of the *cogito*.

> ...full self-possession requires that we free ourselves from the projections of meanings onto things, that we be able to draw back from the world, and concentrate purely on our own processes of observation and thought about things. (Taylor, 1975, p. 7)

While the disenchantment of the world from an inherently meaningful cosmos to a neutrally contingent nature was the price paid for the modern conception of objectivity, the gain was in the radical freedom of a self-defining subjectivity. The Enlightenment idealization of Nature addresses the constitutive problem of freedom. Without seeing the gain in this conception, or in refusing to recognize the gain as worth the cost (as occurs with many of the Romantics) this Enlightenment view was nothing but disenchantment, pointing to a new problem it creates: that of affirming a unity between nature and freedom.

Taylor (1989) charts the Enlightenment transformation of the cosmos into Nature and its consequences with erudition and detail. Along with the naturalization of the cosmic order, there is a secularization of the moral, a valorization of feeling, a deepened appreciation of family networks and immediate relationships, and so on, an ensemble of changes that he dubs "the affirmation of ordinary life" (p. 13). Taylor emphasizes these changes so as to resist construing the trade-off between the modern and ancient views in exclusively epistemological terms. Recalling the above characterization of the social-historical conditions in which this epistemology developed, the societal background was one of inequalities, injustices, and authoritarian limits set to freedom that for many chafed to the point of intolerability. This was a discontent the Enlightenment intellectuals experienced and articulated in exemplary fashion. The intellectuals' unceasing scientistic propaganda should be understood against the background of their social history and the broader culture wherein the tradition was perceived as intolerably oppressive. For it was certainly not the case, for example, as an instrumentally-biased historiographer of science might suggest, that the appeal of the new epistemology derived from its technological spin-offs. It is Taylor's thesis that it is within the new ideal of freedom implied in the modern conception of Nature that the appeal of natural science epistemology resided.

> My suggestion is that one of the powerful attractions of this austere vision, long before it 'paid off' in technology, lies in the fact that a disenchanted world is correlative to a self-defining subject, and that the winning through to a self-defining identity was accompanied by a sense of exhilaration and power, that the subject need no longer define his perfection or vice, his equilibrium or disharmony, in relation to an external order. With the forging of this modern subjectivity there comes a new notion of freedom, and a

> newly central role attributed to freedom, *which seems to have proved itself definitive and irreversible*. (1975, pp. 8-9. Emphases added.)

The sense of power and freedom that informs the epistemology of the Enlightenment, as outlined here by Taylor and which I summarize in the phrase the idealization of Nature, comes to play a crucial constitutive role in the formation of the disciplinary order of research (to be examined in Chapter 2). Building on Taylor's characterization, it is my argument that the moral, practical, and theoretical appeal implied by the Enlightenment's "new notion of freedom" and its corresponding "modern subject" prove themselves "definitive and irreversible" formulations because they come to be *effectively institutionalized* in the German university system.

A major difficulty with Taylor's thesis is that it is expressed in terms the Enlightenment *philosophes* did not use, and more seriously – how serious can be assessed by the careful and prolonged attention Taylor (1989) devotes in his major work to this difficulty – that they often appear to express themselves at cross-purposes to this interpretation. Taylor deals with this difficulty by making clear how the revolutionary ideal of the freedom of the self-defining subject was the moral source that implicitly powered the appeal of the explicit epistemology of nature. This is so even as the overt content of this knowledge stance militated against any recognition of its moral component. The freedom of the subject disengaged from a mechanistic, atomistic, homogeneous nature was supposedly impartial and detached through the individual's use of a scientific reason in a way that either understood

the majority of traditionally moral categories as false or illusory or was strangely blind to the moral dimension (see Taylor, 1989, Ch. 19).

The change in worldview which the self-defining stance promoted was only slowly realized outside its original circle of an intellectual elite, which meant that through the centuries of development of the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature the dominant background upheld by culture and society at large was still one of a unitary cosmic order of meaning. Held up against this background by restricted circles of a small intellectual community, the notion of a self-defining subject was exhilarating and powerful. The gradual and chronologically uneven development of the modern view, in part due to the resistance offered by its opponents, and in part due to the difficulty of realizing a genuinely alternative perspective, make it virtually certain that the full consequential extent of either the costs or the benefits of the new view would have been foreseen or well-articulated at the time. The alteration in view did not happen all at once; to cite one salient example, between the ancient view of cosmos and modern scientific naturalism the Deist conception of a "providential order" plays an essential intermediary role in naturalizing the Christian conception of grace (Taylor, 1989, pp. 234-84). The resilience and monolithic presence of the traditional conception of a meaningful cosmos obscured the far-reaching consequences of a disenchanted worldview, which might well have horrified those whom in retrospect we perceive as its proponents. Not having to face the consequences of the modern view made it easy for its proponents to leave presuppositions and implications unexamined, particularly among the more radical

philosophes such as the French materialists. Disenchantment as the description of the process the *philosophes* realized, it has to be remembered, was only ascribed with any clarity in hindsight. In this sense, as Taylor (1989) discusses, the formulations of the "radical Enlightenment" were parasitic on the cosmic background they reject (pp. 338-40).

There are profound tensions within the modern view, as it needs to formulate an account not only of the new objectivity and new subjectivity which post-Kant has come to be understood as an epistemological split of nature and freedom, but also of their means of correlation. Post-Descartes, there are numerous attempts to resolve the mind-body dualism, as his invocation of the pineal gland as their intersection point and of God as arbiter proved unsatisfactory. A fundamental difficulty was (and continues to be) the subject consisting, somehow, in a mix of indifferent causal mechanism alongside radically free consciousness. This difficulty was never sufficient to undermine the supreme confidence of the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature and its corresponding conception of reason and freedom. Perhaps most tellingly accomplished by Hume, this *naturalistic* conception could even be made explicit despite its wildly implausible empirical consequences without jeopardizing acceptance of the epistemology. In this light Hume's account of experience and the subject as "a bundle of sensations" seems more accurately described as a rationalization of empiricist theory rather than an empiricist skepticism about reason. In the German context at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Enlightenment ideal of freedom fires the imaginations of philosophers, educators,

and reformers as they attempt to both integrate this ideal into their self-understanding and overcome the dilemma posed by its epistemology which seemed to irreparably split the unity of the cosmic order. This dilemma comes to be articulated in the crisis of philosophy as the demand for the establishment of a genuine unity.

Conclusion: Implications of the Enlightenment

Joseph Ben-David's social history of class-state relations as the context wherein science comes to be institutionalized and Charles Taylor's intellectual history in terms of the moral sources that motivate the development of philosophical outlooks make clear that the Enlightenment understood knowledge and science to be above all about the *realization of a better society*. In a post-Kantian world, this is a crucial historical insight to recapture as an epistemological reading of the Enlightenment's view of knowledge in terms of cognitive representations or a logically consistent system of reason would be inaccurate and miss the dramatic power the *philosophes* certainly experienced. For the British science was a model or a template for a better society; for the French, science was a manifesto or, as Voltaire's "*Écrasez l'infâme!*" defiantly proclaimed, a battle cry.[10]

Both the French and the British were utilitarian and positivistic in their conception of science not only in terms of how they understood what science was but also of how they understood what science was for: instrumental means to accomplish practical ends of a primarily social and political nature. (This sense of utilitarian is not to be confused with the notion of technologically-useful application of

knowledge, a possibility that only realistically emerges in the last decades of the nineteenth century.) Sociologically, science was supported in Britain and France because of its perceived progressive aims (notably, greater freedom from wants, needs, and tradition) according to certain social strata to which the intellectuals belonged or which they wooed that were situated within either the ruling classes or the victorious revolutionary classes. This feature is crucial for understanding how science was perceived, supported, and institutionalized within Britain and France. Influential social classes promoted science based on its social-political utility for reform or revolution. The elite who disseminated science as the basis for social change and the means to realize progressive ideals of greater freedom, social equality, and just authority, assisted in cultivating a *broader scientistic culture* within society that upheld scientific values. They also capitalized on possibilities within the state's otherwise ambivalent relation to science through effecting institutionalization of its scientific practice in different forms (societies, academies, technical schools). It is within this context that the great intellectual progress, beginning from the work of Descartes, Bacon, and Galileo, through Newton's seminal achievements to the numerous and brilliant extensions and consolidation of the Newtonian framework, should be situated, while any adequate assessment of the Industrial and French Revolutions would need to account for this context.

Nevertheless, the historical fact remains that it is neither the British nor the French but the German institution of science which proves to endure in a form that has remained more or less definitive until the present day, the peculiarity that drives

Ben-David's (1971) analysis. The significance of the Enlightenment history requires being translated through the conceptual and practical transformations in Germany wrought by, as Steven Turner (1987) phrased it, "the great transition" wherein the "distinctly modern form" of the sciences as a disciplinary order of research within the university system is instituted. The manner in which the issues animating the Enlightenment become configured within the context of German educational reform decisively casts them into an altered light such that there is more of a discontinuity between the Enlightenment understanding of these issues and our understanding than there is continuity. The discontinuity between the Enlightenment and our present raises the question of the philosophical significance of 'disciplinarity', as instated through the institutionalization of the modern disciplinary order, as follows: What transformation of the intellectual role and of our capacity for evaluation does the new disciplinary order effect, such that in retrospect it can be described as the result of a great transition and prove to divide us from our Enlightenment forebears in a drastic fashion even as we share their concerns? The crisis of philosophy engendered by the Enlightenment and centered on the constitutive problem of unity sets the philosophical significance of the disciplinary order of research. That the institutional and intellectual transformations effected through the establishment of the disciplinary order as the response to this crisis serve to divide us from the Enlightenment suggests that the problem of unity has either been adequately addressed (that is, the problem is resolved) or that the disciplinary order was an ultimately inadequate response that has created a new problem (either displacing or compounding the problem of unity).

The historical fact that it is neither the British nor the French but the German institution of science that proves to endure initiated Ben-David's (1971) inquiry and it is the thread of his analysis that will be resumed in the following chapter. In brief, the issue turns on what unique constellation of factors were brought together in the context of early nineteenth century Germany that were absent in Britain and France. Both the British and the French accomplished an institutionalization of science that overcame the great difficulty of establishing an open space for the free pursuit of inquiry through striking some balance between the pressures of societal interest, state interest, and university corporate interest. In each case there was an initial success; Britain's Royal Society was the leader in scientific study in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, followed by the Paris *écoles* instituted in the 1790s for the pursuit of scientific and scholarly research which dominated European intellectual life for a few decades. Ben-David convincingly demonstrates that in each case the success of science was dependent above all on the support of a broad-based *scientistic culture* cultivated by the intellectuals and scientists the institutional arrangements are intended to sustain but could not. The German system successfully accomplishes this aim, an accomplishment as ironic as it is dramatic. Why does the most radical revolutionary impulse for effecting social change (ostensibly progressive), as embedded within the concept of the purely intellectual freedom of research and 'pure science', emerge within the traditionally-minded, conservative German context and not in the British or the French context? Why does the highly efficient, technical-utilitarian conception of knowledge as research,

which amounts to an industrialization of intellectual life (Littman, 1979, p. 51) and establishes the template for the "industrialization of science" (Ravetz, 1971), emerge within the avowedly anti-utilitarian and explicitly neohumanistic, romantic, and idealist attitudes that compose the German ethos of that time? It is through addressing these questions in the next chapter that the full philosophical significance of the disciplinary order as a response to the problem of unity will be illuminated, the new constitutive problem it raises made explicit, and the context set for examination of psychology's own constitutive problem as a discipline of creating a science of experience.

Chapter 2. The disciplinary order of research

Social-historical aspects of Germany's "great transition"

The specific social-historical constituents of the patchwork of German states mediate their reception of the Enlightenment and its ideals. As outlined in the previous chapter, what this meant for German intellectuals (unlike their compatriots in Britain and France) was the lack of any broad-based social class or movement capable of realizing social change. There was a German analogue in the emergence of a disaffected social class that was literate, self-educated, and cultured. It operated outside the traditional educational establishment and earnestly advocated a transformation of German society, but in an entirely apolitical and anti-utilitarian sense along moral, aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual lines. If there was to be revolution in the land of poets and writers it would be, at least on the surface, a philosophical one (Schnädelbach, 1984, p. 17).

In the conservative, socio-politically backward setting of the German states, the Enlightenment ideal of freedom had a powerful appeal, not in the sober British terms of useful reform or in the radical French terms of a bloody revolution, but in philosophical terms of a secular realization of 'the German spirit'. For those intellectuals who were not opposed to religion, secularization would not be the overthrow of a Pietist spirituality from which 'the German spirit' emerges, but the continuation, deepening, and confirmation of Pietism's deepest inner meaning. Persons and movements such as Hamann, Herder, Wolf, the *Sturm und Drang*, the brothers Grimm, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Hölderlin, and the Romantics – to name

only a few! – nurture and express an extraordinary outpouring of German cultural identity through idealizations of the *Volk* as soul, spirit, race, nation, and so on. Taylor (1975) describes vividly this "expressivist movement" with its "passionate demand for unity and wholeness" (p. 23). Given the motley assortment of provincial fragments and principalities ranging from the smallest bishopric to the Prussian state, any notion of unity had to be expressed in spiritual-aesthetic coin that celebrated common denominations of language, custom, myth, style, and history. This rich literary stratum within German society is instrumental in displacing the center of gravity of erudition from the traditional learned class ensconced in the universities to a new center in philosophy which was now elevated from its traditional position as the "lower" faculty (beneath law, medicine, and theology, which as nearest to the state authority, were in the traditional hierarchy 'at the top') to the "higher" faculty (as the nearest to reason which in true Enlightenment fashion has in theory greater authority than the state). A number of strands – neohumanism, Romanticism, Kantian transcendentalism, idealism, and 'experimentalism' – converge in constituting the new conception of philosophy as well as assisting in the reversal of its fortunes. A convenient manner of designating this multiplicity is by leaving the untranslatable *Wissenschaft* in the German so as to leave implicit within the term its original connotation of the full range of intellectual inquiry from idealist philosophy and speculative metaphysics to classical-humanistic studies to the experimental natural sciences.

The ascension of philosophy to the privilege of being highest faculty reflects the success of a long period of educational reform (McClelland, 1980; Turner, 1971 – 1987). German intellectuals in the eighteenth century were forced to work through the traditional channels of established institutions, of which there were three: the institutes and academies where research was conducted, the patronage of the royal courts, or the medieval structure of the corporate university, charged with teaching as the transmission of tradition and the professional training of civil servants for government service. The difficulty with the first two options was the dominance of the French whose research within France was far superior to the Germans, and who were therefore preferred for patronage over Germans within Germany. Maupertius was president of the Berlin academy, while the Prussian king Frederick the Great hosted Voltaire at his court (Ben-David, 1971, p. 111). Something like the patronage of Goethe in Weimar was an exception; a case like Kant's, who remained an *ordinarius* his entire career in the lower faculty of philosophy at Königsberg, was the rule (Hofstetter, 2001).

The third option was the university, but its sorry condition in the eighteenth century was a frustrating commonplace that, in tandem with the lack of politically progressive possibilities, had a number of consequential outcomes. Student enrolments dropped markedly, with many seeking technical training elsewhere as affording better opportunities (Turner, 1980). This threatened the relevance of the universities and the livelihoods of the professors it employed, not least from the state and ecclesiastical authorities which supported them, as well as acutely

bringing into focus the fragility of the intellectual ideals of disinterested truth and universal reason. At the same time and from another direction the steady and seemingly unlimited accumulation of new discoveries in many of the sciences, the proliferation of theories, journals, and emerging specializations, and the deepening and consolidating of Newtonian mechanics within physics (e.g. Laplace) along with its application to other fields, demanded new modes of organization, means of communication, criteria of evaluation, and increased maintenance of standards. The social and political reverberations across the continent from the dynamism and excesses of the French Revolution intensifies these demands and lends them a great sense of urgency. In a time of searching questions and anxiety laden with an unprecedented promise and scarcely-imaginable potential for progress, philosophy faced the daunting challenge of providing a coherent and grounded epistemological unity for knowledge that was otherwise in danger of becoming a chaos of unrelated fragments. The challenge of providing a compelling account of unity also put the identity of philosophers at stake. If they could not provide a solution to the problem of unity, then what role did intellectuals have in society? The question of the universities was inseparable from the crisis of philosophy and intellectual life.

Turner (1983) outlines how these pressures spelled the demise of a certain tradition of scholarship, and the class it represented, which had been sustained in the German universities since the Renaissance and defined by humanism. The "*Gelehrtenstand*" were the traditional literati: they were scholars of the classics, learned in Greek, Latin, and history, and possessed of great erudition and a "baroque love of detail"

(p. 453). Distinguished by an expressive style that was the signature of their social status and also the criterion for inclusion and prestige within the scholarly elite they composed, the great transition at the turn of the nineteenth century marks their end. In their place steps a new breed, the "*Bildungsbürgerstum*", the modern scholar who was professionally trained to be an expert in a specialized field judged by discipline-specific standards of quality that stressed systematicity and thoroughness. From the point of view of the latter, the traditional scholars were generalists, popularizers, pedants, aesthetes, and dilettantes. Research and the creative discovery of knowledge now shares pride of place with teaching and the transmission of tradition. Traditional subjects and the Latin curriculum are augmented by modern, contemporary subjects and replaced by the vernacular. Knowledge comes to be differentiated along functional rather than stylistic grounds, and the scholar is no longer a gentleman defined by a particular way of life that is his calling and which gains him status within a certain learned class but instead a member of a professional research community which provides a livelihood and that defines his or her career. Over the process of this transition a number of educational innovations – social, technical, and organizational – are instituted that sustain these changes and establish a practical template for their continuation and reproduction.

Neohumanism: Wolf's philology and the idealization of the field

Many of these innovations are most vigorously instigated through and by the very classical humanist tradition that was under threat, giving rise to neohumanism as one of the most well-known and influential movements of thought in turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Germany, as represented by such luminaries as Herder, Goethe,

Schiller, Friedrich Wolf, and August Boeckh. In particular, changes within philology initiated by Wolf and sustained by Boeckh assist in the practical transformation of scholarship.

Wolf's mentor Heinrich Heine was himself an influential reformer of classical and historical studies and a primary impetus behind the transformation of the Greek cultural ideal of *paideia* (Jaeger, 1945) into *Bildung* as the ideal for moral development or a cultivation of character (Diehl, 1978, p. 19). Wolf carried on this reform in overcoming philology's dependence on theology. He created entirely new standards for classical scholarship, stubbornly (and successfully) refused to enroll in the faculties of theology or law as was traditionally demanded, and called himself "a philologist" (Diehl, 1978, p. 47). The new standards Wolf set were exemplified in his work the *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, and entrenched and passed on to a coterie of students through the inauguration of a seminar in 1787 for training in critical techniques. A select group of disciples attended (Boeckh and Wilhelm von Humboldt among them). The new standards of criticism (*Kritik*, which would become the methodological byword in the nineteenth century for the humanistic disciplines, particularly history and philology) were representative of the new systematic conception of scholarship as *Wissenschaft*. Through immersion in *Wissenschaft*, which for pupils of Wolf was to be understood through the objective standards of criticism embodied in Wolf's person as the standard-bearer, the pupil's own moral character was cultivated and realized. Wolf's work was ground-breaking according to Diehl (1978) not so much in the rigor of his methods *per se*, which

were undoubtedly an advance but essentially a difference of degree and not of kind. Rather, as primarily evident in Wolf's rhetoric, it was the conflation of character, skill in criticism, and subject matter as if they were all of a single piece that was novel. For the implications of this way of understanding scholarship were that the philological standards defined the quality of the scholar's work *and the scholarly community* fit to judge that quality.

> The *Prolegomena* is a case study, a paradigm of the segregation of knowledge, its appropriation for scholarship, not by a specific scholarly discipline – for those did not exist in any modern sense – but by a scholarly stance. …This kind of [exclusionary] rhetoric for the first time erects a barrier between a lay reader and a specialist and denies to the former the validity of his critical insights and interpretations. (Diehl, 1978, p. 39)

In hindsight, Wolf's work could be simply described as specific to the discipline of philology, but as he was pivotal in founding its very status as 'disciplinary' this description would be erroneous. More precisely he should be characterized as reading methodological considerations through the ideal of *Wissenschaft* in such a way that scholarship as a calling that established one's moral character also entailed a process of reciprocal definition: the integrity of a scholarly community was defined *through its investigation* of a particular domain, and therefore that particular community asserted an exclusive propriety over that domain. Wolf was surreptitiously tying to the ideal of *Wissenschaft* as philosophical-scientific knowledge an ideal or form of inquiry as its necessary adjunct. The implications of this combination were the concomitant creation of a specific investigative community of scholars and of a conception that "is both peculiar to and necessary for modern scholarship… that again distinguishes Wolf from his predecessors",

which is the "conception of a defined but constantly expanding 'field'" (Diehl, 1978, pp. 45, 147).

Against the Enlightenment background of the overwhelming appeal of natural science/philosophy it is clear why this reciprocal definition of community and field was not perceived as tautological or circular. The field is not the scholar's creation (or in contemporary parlance, 'construction') but its composition is determined, like a Newtonian field of physical force, by laws of nature. Hence Wolf can refer to "the field of Homer" and invoke a "necessity… with which Nature herself agrees" (cited in Diehl, 1978, pp. 41, 45) in the same breath. As naturally given, whether in physics or history, chemistry or philology, the field's composition has been lawfully determined. The scholar through research *discovers* this composition. Clearly the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature is essential epistemological backing to Wolf's rationale, as is its intention in the name of progressive change for the realization of freedom to extend Newton's light of natural philosophy into every dark corner of the world: whether Homer, the state, or the soul. Reason will in every case, as light does, illuminate a *field*.

It is my claim that this triumvirate of community, inquiry, and a naturalistically-given field forms the central premise upon which the modern disciplinary order of research rests. For the sake of systematicity and something of a schema, I characterize this three-part premise to which Wolf decisively contributes in its initial stages of development as *the idealization of the field* so as to emphasize its

unexamined, presupposed ground in the Enlightenment idealization of Nature. Wolf does not outline this premise in these terms, of course, nor is his contribution definitive. His efforts were directed at the specific constitutive problem of philology in the context of a crisis of the humanities, and his solution was instrumental in defining philology as a discipline as well as defining more generally Germanic 'new humanism'. Wolf's contribution is one influential strand among several over the course of one 'research generation' of the decades from 1800 to 1830 that will compose the particular configuration of the idealization of the field.[1] Each contribution to this idealization was a response in a particular way to the crisis in intellectual life, and can therefore be interpreted as collectively engaged in addressing the constitutive problem of unity defining the crisis. This chapter aims at gaining an adequate grasp of these strands and their collective result.

That the idealization of the field is only sensible when situated against the background of the Enlightenment idealization of Nature suggests that it draws some of its power from the moral appeal (in Charles Taylor's terms as discussed in the previous chapter) of the radical freedom of a disengaged and hence self-defining subject. To substantiate this claim requires recognition of the numerous social and intellectual transpositions brought about through the idealization of the field relative to the idealization of Nature and given institutional form through the German educational system. Most dramatically, the reconfiguration of concern effected by the idealization of the field in terms of the disengaged and self-defining subject resides in the tying of the ideal of freedom to research finding its parallel in its

subsuming the *identity* of the individual subject to that of a particular *disciplinary community*. As the idealization of Nature (writ large) obtains freedom for the disengaged, self-defining subject, the idealization of the field that breaks Nature down into naturalistically-given fields obtains freedom for each community which investigates its field. It is the disciplinary community that becomes disengaged and self-defining and by implication, the individual subject gains freedom through membership in and therefore identification with the disciplinary community.

While the value of Wolf's *Prolegomena* particularly on methodological grounds was incontestable many of his contemporaries reacted uneasily, possibly due to an unarticulated intuition as to the far-ranging consequences of his proprietary claims. Most notably his friend of thirty years Goethe "confided" in a letter to Schiller an unspecified "doubt about the work that was to worry him periodically for the rest of his life" (Diehl, 1978, p. 46). What cements Wolf's version of philology, however, are his students. In their being trained in the seminar, they reproduced his methods, refined his techniques, applied his standards, extended his theses, and most importantly, established their own seminars. Boeckh's philology seminar, "founded at Berlin in 1810, became the model for those of the nineteenth century" (Turner, 1980, p. 88); "by 1835 or earlier... the model it afforded was being copied by other disciplines in Germany and other philological communities abroad" (Turner, 1983, p. 475). Boeckh's philology seminar was the model not only for those in philology, but for all the emerging disciplines. For example, "Franz Neumann in 1835/36 [with Carl Gustav] Jacobi founded the Königsberg mathematics/physics seminar

modeled directly upon Boeckh's seminar" (Turner, 1971, p. 149). In history and mathematics there were concurrent developments, and chemistry and physiology follow soon after (Turner, 1987).

The dynamic that is set into motion snowballs into further consequences: with the development of a methodologically self-conscious community defined according to certain standards of criticism, the possibility opens of establishing a specialized journal that publishes the community's research. The proprietary claims of those scholars in relation to their standards affords gate-keeping, or as Turner (1983) puts it, "the tyranny of disciplinary expertise" (p. 465), ending the existence of the "*Allgemeines Gelehrtentum*", making more pronounced the division between the professional and the lay-person, and raising standards in either a qualitatively or esoterically higher direction (most commonly, in both). This process of continually accentuating boundaries of inclusion – "professionalization" – and exclusion (what Daniels (1967a) appropriately designates "preemption") created intense competition between schools vying for ascendancy over the same field, and a constant tension as each succeeding research generation strives to supercede the preceding one (most dramatically illustrated by the fate of Wolf himself, as by 1812 the very dynamic in research he helped initiate eventuated in "a minor scandal" due to his "personal and scholarly incapacity to lead his school at Berlin" (Turner, 1983, p. 467)).

A crucial aspect of what was at stake involved an emerging discipline's proprietary claims over its field, a feat that Wolf had accomplished *de facto*, not *de jure*,

through his surreptitious tying of an ideal of research to the ideal of *Wissenschaft*. In retrospect this amounted to a solution serving the interests of the particular discipline it helped constitute (such as philology), and a successful survival strategy on the part of the humanist scholars at reinventing themselves and their studies in the face of extreme social, political, and institutional pressure to prove their worth. However, more broadly speaking, this strategy exacerbated the ongoing crisis of intellectual life effected by the proliferation of knowledge and specialization, and in addressing this nexus of issues it proves, as it did for any German thinker at the time, impossible to ignore the enormous figure of Kant, whom his contemporary Heine described as "the Robespierre of the philosophical revolution" who "stormed heaven" (cited in Schnädelbach, 1984, p. 17).

Radical freedom & unity: Kant's transcendentalism, Romanticism, & idealism

Kant accepted as unavoidable, even as he worried about its effects, the vast and variegated proliferation of findings, theories, and specializations, and the apparent fragmentation of intellectual life it expressed. He addresses the issue through articulating in his three *Critiques* a formidably complex architectonic that, among a number of other equally or more significant consequences, effectively situates the problem of legitimating knowledge and knowledge's "domains", "territories", "realms", "jurisdictions", "legislations", and so forth (Kant intersperses legal, spatial, and sovereign terminology) within the ambit of epistemology. In so doing he makes the criterion for deciding limits, distinctions, and boundaries a *formal rule*; that is, a decision derived by means of a methodological analysis. He accomplishes this through an unprecedented form of demonstration or 'proof'

which, post-Kant, comes to be called "transcendental argument", an achievement that in many senses remains unsurpassed (see Taylor, 1995, Ch. 2). This achievement is of paramount importance for Kant's purposes, in that it establishes the philosopher's role as the adjudicator of competing knowledge claims and in this way, as the trans-disciplinary discipline, manages the proliferation of knowledge without the latter losing its orientation to an integral unity of truth.

In terms of the emergence of the disciplinary order of research, the significance of Kant's formulation resides in the seemingly justifiable conviction that each and every disciplinary field would prove capable of having its 'ultimate', that is, *epistemological* grounds and principles legitimated and established through a rigorous clarification of their immanent methodology. It also meant, in the indistinct, undifferentiated conflation of a particular discipline with the universality of *Wissenschaft*, that individual disciplines escaped suspicion as to self-interest through the appeal to their ground in the trans-disciplinary, disinterested truth of *Wissenschaft*. Such an epistemological self-understanding functioned as the *formal* confirmation of the implicit conception of knowledge as *naturally* differentiated into distinct fields. In this regard it is insightful to note that Kant's work (primarily the *Critique of pure reason*) served positivist and empiricist philosophers alike (such as J. S. Mill and Helmholtz, respectively) for developing their epistemological accountability (cf. Mandelbaum, 1971, pp. 10-20). Unfortunately this usage of Kant relied mostly on a fundamental misunderstanding of his transcendentalism that was in effect a regression to a pre-Kantian empiricism. The

result is that scientists in utilizing Kantianism at the same time mutilated it, usually through transforming his *a priori* categories into naturalistic ones (Harrington, 1996, Ch. 1). Practically, Kantian philosophy of science meant additional ammunition of the highest philosophical caliber for claims to the distinctiveness and ubiquity of a research community as scholars in newly-emerging fields rushed to defend their discipline on an epistemological and methodological basis (Danziger, 1990, pp. 18-24). The far-reaching importance of the use and misuse of Kant to embed the naturalism presupposed in the idealization of the field cannot be overemphasized.

Kant's concern with the role of philosophy was not firstly in a notion of its adjudication of conflicts between the *disciplines* (which did not exist as yet), although in retrospect his work could be productively interpreted in this way. Rather Kant (1798/1979) understood philosophy in terms of its intrinsic connection to freedom in the context of the "conflict of the faculties" as the very basis of the university. Unlike the higher faculties of law, medicine, and theology which served the interests of the state in training its servants in those professions, the lower faculty of philosophy which by definition recognized only the authority of reason was of necessity disinterested. Kant's 1784 tract "*What is Enlightenment?*" defines Enlightenment and philosophy in these very terms as the freedom from authority (reproduced in Foucault, 1997, pp. 7-20). Kant's being censured on religious grounds by King Friedrich William II in 1794 for the views expressed in *Religion within the limits of reason alone* offered personal experience of the clash between

freedom and authority. Kant's response was to publish the *Conflict of the Faculties* (Shaffer, 1990, p. 39). Kant (1798/1979) argues that the differing allegiances to the divergent authorities of disinterested reason which demands freedom, over against political interest, which demands obedience, is driven by a conflict between the university and the state. Kant's *Critiques*, in particular the *Critique of practical reason*, elaborate the philosophical grounds for the link between reason and freedom within the autonomy of the subject's moral will. Taylor (1975) argues that this conception, yet more radical again than the Enlightenment's, was "the highest, purest, most uncompromising vision of self-determining freedom", which "turned the head of a whole generation" (p. 32).

One component of its radicality, which appealed to neohumanists, Romantics, and idealists alike, was its 'pure', moral, uncompromising anti-utilitarian position. Neither the medieval-guild university which trained an aristocratic elite, nor the more recent utilitarian university of the Enlightenment which trained a scientistic elite to 'apply' reason to society were acceptable options (Schnädelbach, 1984, p. 22). This anti-utilitarian component and its corresponding conception of *Wissenschaft* as representative of that freedom is retained in Humboldt's "Romantic idea of a university" (Hofstetter, 2001, p. 31). Central to the Humboldt university was the formal institutionalizing, nearly a century after they were first minted at Halle in 1711, of the principles of freedom of learning and teaching (*Lernfreiheit* and *Lehrfreiheit*) (Littman, 1979, p. 46). Kant's ostensible reconciliation of Nature and Freedom took place on the highest moral-aesthetic grounds, and indeed in his

third critique judgment mediates between the two domains aesthetically through a "harmony" of the faculties which, in estimates of beauty, utilizes a freedom of the imagination that Kant significantly makes directly analogous to moral judgments (*Critique of Judgment*, § 59). Ironically, this account is utilized by numerous nineteenth century philosophers in a way that directly counters positivism and empiricism, whose proponents as noted above also used Kant (that is, the Kant of the first critique) for their own ends (see Harrington, 1996).

On Kant's account, through mediating Nature and Freedom he founds a deeper and higher moral unity of the subject that, first, overcomes the dilemmas of skepticism versus dogmatism and empiricism versus rationalism and, second, provides a viable transcendental-critical launch point for a genuine metaphysical philosophy. While the former point lends great potency to the ideals of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung* and "turns the head of a whole generation" – most markedly, his protégé Fichte's – the latter point meets equally widespread resistance from philosophers and literati alike. It draws the fire of the Romantics for they perceive Kant as having accomplished a "diremption with nature… more radical than anything the materialist, utilitarian Enlightenment had dreamed" (Taylor, 1975, p. 33).

Romanticism, as noted above, was defined above all by a passion for unity that the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature, and Kant's moral subject, had jeopardized. What was radical freedom for one was a fraudulent alienation to the other. "Like the dead stroke of the pendulum, Nature – bereft of gods – slavishly serves the law of

gravity" (from Schiller's *The Gods of Greece*, cited in Harrington, 1996, p. 4). Taylor (1975) points out that the Romantic aspiration to unity was not merely nostalgia for a return to a distant past, but experienced as a pressing demand raised by history. The various divisions that the Enlightenment had erected between rational will and nature, the subject and the objective world, the mind and the body, and so on, needed to be superceded. In the Romantic focus on unity, and its conception in terms of an "expressivism" (Taylor derives the term from Isaiah Berlin's word "expressionism" (1976)), the Romantics make two powerful contributions to the ideal of *Wissenschaft*: the first is a veneration and articulation of *creativity* that was without precedent. The second is a manner of construing the individual attainment of *Bildung* as concomitantly the realization of a trans-personal unity of *Kultur* (and also, *Geist*).

In rejecting the Enlightenment view of nature as mechanistic, atomistic, and contingently related, the Romantics also rejected its homogenizing of difference and exclusive focus on efficient causes, and instead celebrated the numerous differences, particularly between peoples, customs, beliefs, and languages, as so many expressions of an inner spiritual nature striving to come to its full realization (Berlin, 1999). As expression, the notion of unity was not additive or quantitative, but rather a matter of an organic wholeness or self-identity (Reddick, 1990). Insofar as it involved a pantheistic conception of nature as spirit, the manner in which this expressed wholeness was incarnate in a person or a people was through a mode of feeling or intuition: as Goethe, the exemplary representative of wholeness, writes in

Faust, "Feeling is all". In this sense there was a powerful valorization of the particular self-identity of a group, or people, or nation that was understood in terms of expressing an innermost nature in which the individual could participate fully if only he had cultivated his own character sufficiently to enable such a feeling sympathy or intuitive communion (Berlin, 1999).

Such a formulation also entailed a potent link between *Wissenschaft* and German nationalism insofar as the former was expressive of the latter (Fichte's nationalistic outlook is famous, as is Hegel's interpretation of the state). Given the political disunity of Germany at the time the notion of a unity of *Kultur* and *Geist* and a patriotic coloring of the *Bildung* ideal in nationalistic terms held a strong appeal. (Upon political unification under Bismarck in 1871 by means of "blood and iron", there are laments for Germany's previous "inner, cultural unity" (Harrington, 1996, pp. 19-20).) Strong strands of this conception of *Kultur* and *Geist* are incorporated into idealism and its *Natuurphilosophie* with the difference being the philosophers' firm insistence on the fundamentality of reason. The *Wissenschaft-Bildung* complex that conceptualized the realization of knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) as also therefore the establishment of one's own moral autonomy (*Bildung*) is further enriched through the Romantics' expressivist view of *Kultur* and *Geist*, which adds the notion that what is expressed in the attainment of *Wissenschaft* is also in the most profound or deepest aesthetic sense the culture and spirit of one's people (in this case the German people). The appeal of this view was overwhelming and long-lived. According to Taylor (1975) we still respond to the expressivist view to such a

great extent that he claims it is fair to say we are "still at home in the Romantic period" (p. 571).

In the context of Napoleon's defeat of the Prussian army at Jena in 1806 (and subsequent instituting of French technical-utilitarian style education in the German universities (Fallon, 1980)), this cultural idealization of German spirit as embodied in the anti-utilitarian, secular philosophy of *Wissenschaft* had immediate and far-reaching consequences. For one, German state governments did an about-face and temporarily renounced their own typically utilitarian stance to higher education, endorsing the *Wissenschaft* ideal over against the common political enemy, France (Ben-David, 1971, p. 116). Most notably, politicians and intellectuals alike were galvanized into founding the Berlin University three years later, a "phoenixlike symbol of Prussia's resistance to Napoleon" (Turner, 1971, p. 173). The Germans would outdo their neighbors in spirit as they could not do in military or political might. In this wise the Romanticism of turn of the century Germany provides a potent account of nature in aesthetic-spiritual terms of feeling and expressive unity that becomes a viable alternative to the Enlightenment's technical-utilitarian idealization of Nature in terms of a disengaged subject and rational control. However, both the Romantics and the Enlightenment thinkers share a deeper background motivation for this focus on Nature in conceiving it as the means through which socially and politically progressive change could be effected, primarily through secularizing domains traditionally held on religious grounds by

extending the scope of Nature's effective authority as a nontraditional source of knowledge and values.

Bildung could only be expressive of *Kultur* if the moral character of one's person was genuinely transformed. On this view the study of *Wissenschaft* could never be the 'transmission' of tradition in any static or iterative sense but had to consist in an attainment of knowledge in a creative act that was also self-creation (Berlin, 1999). Consequently, the principle of the unity of research and teaching that forms the educational ideal for the new German university was not a mere *addition* of research to equal status with teaching, but a transformation of the very meaning of 'teaching' such that it proves in effect subordinate to and all too easily subsumed by the category of research.

In the idealist philosophies of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel the principle of unity was given its most powerful expression as in contradistinction to the Romantic appeal of feeling or intuition each idealist philosopher strove to provide a *systematic* ontology to undergird the synthetic identity of Reason and Nature (Taylor, 1975). In the newly-inaugurated transcendental vein of Kant the elaboration of this system also established on a rigorously ascertained and putatively 'universally necessary and true' foundation the grounds to all knowledge and the sciences. The idealist philosopher who embodied the highest syntheses of *Wissenschaft* in his very person was the final arbiter of truth and in this sense of the integrity of knowledge. In this way and despite the proliferation of views it

fomented or their apparent conflicts or fragmentation, *Wissenschaft* as the unity of knowledge that overcome the crisis of philosophy was guaranteed by way of recourse to a *synoptic ideal*. This heady mixture dominated the atmosphere in the first decades of the nineteenth century and was a vital force along with the impetus of neohumanism and Romanticism behind the renewal of German intellectual life that comes to its most symbolic representation in the founding of the Berlin University in 1809. Perhaps what is most striking about this mixture is its bringing together of the principle of universality with principles of individuality and 'culture' (which could in its ambiguity mean nationality, spirit, race, and so forth).

However, the widespread success and dominance of idealism should not be understood on exclusively conceptual grounds, but the practical contributions of the social-historical situation must be taken into account, and here the most powerful of ironies reveals itself in that the practical fortunes of idealism have to be attributed to its usefulness to the state (McClelland, 1980; Turner, 1971). Further, in the philosophers' arrogating to *Wissenschaft* the power of ultimate arbiter of truth they threaten the propriety of other fields within the philosophy faculty, such as the philologists and historians who redouble their efforts to distinguish themselves from the philosophers and assert the autonomy of their own work. Also, the power of the idealists shades into an arrogance that manifests in contempt and disdain for technical, utilitarian, empirical work as exemplified in experimental science. Thus the experimentalists find themselves arraigned against the idealists as well, albeit for very different reasons than the neohumanists. The consequences of the

Wissenschaftsideologie stance cannot be overlooked, for the deep-rooted tensions these attitudes express prove to be a major factor in undoing the idealist aspiration to unity (Ringer, 1969).

Educational reform, the state, and the research ideal

The German conception of science and philosophy at the time of Humboldt's founding the Berlin University in 1809 was summarized in the ideal of *Wissenschaft*. Fed by the neohumanistic, Romantic, and idealist strands within German scholarship, this ideal explicitly emphasized a cultural and spiritual revitalization along moral and aesthetic lines that was radically anti-utilitarian and defined itself apolitically. Consequently within the educational framework of the universities where the intellectuals did exert influence their anti-utilitarian composition was at loggerheads with the state's utilitarian ambitions: "the State had narrow, practical interests which were at odds with the unlimited nature of *Wissenschaft*" (Hofstetter, 2001, p. 100). Thus the varied programmatic elaborations of possible university structures solicited by Humboldt from the philosophers and theologians Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Steffens in the months preceding the founding of the Berlin University articulate the *Wissenschaft* ideal through a redefined role of scholarship as research that addresses the relations between the university and the state in *idealized* terms (Fallon, 1980; Lawler, 1991; Röhrs, 1995).

On this ideal formulation, the state gives the scholar freedom for the disinterested, pure pursuit of his research which serves the state indirectly through the scholar's

creative realization of universal truth. The research is undertaken by the scholar in close company with an elite set of students who partake in this realization of truth which was also expressive of German culture and consciousness. The radically anti-utilitarian understanding of *Wissenschaft* confirmed the sociopolitical situation that had defined the program of educational reform, namely that the only effective means for realizing greater freedoms (social, intellectual, and otherwise) lay with the state (McClelland, 1980). The idealistic understanding of *Wissenschaft* compromised with the needs and interests of the state results in the creation, not of Platonic philosopher-kings that rule the nation, but of philosopher-bureaucrats who administer it. To quote Helmuth Plessner's assessment, "German university scholarship is 'bureaucratic scholarship'" (cited in Schnädelbach, 1984, p. 23).

Practically the ideal construal of state-scholar relations meant the following arrangement: the newly established government post of Minister of Culture would *bypass the traditional corporate authority* of the university and appoint chairs directly. The position of chair within philosophy manifested as a research institute meaning authority vested in the chair over a coterie of students that would carry on intensive study and training along the lines of Wolf's and Boeckh's philological seminar discussed above (Turner, 1971). The *Habilitation* was established based on the criterion of an original contribution to research, and the post of *Privatdozenten* as teachers and researchers who had obtained their *Habilitation* and awaited permanent appointment was instituted (Ben-David, 1971, p. 121). By the 1830s the notion of the seminar had expanded to include the laboratory of the experimental

scientists. All these innovations were instituted under the auspices of the philosophical faculty and amounted to the transformation of science and scholarship from a calling or vocation into a career in a profession (although owing to the dominance of *Wissenschaftsideologie*, the former terminology endures, as for example Max Weber's famous 1919 address on "*Science as a vocation*" (reproduced in Shils, 1974)).[2]

Alongside Humboldt's establishment of the Berlin University there were other innovations initiated by Prussia and the other German states that followed suit. Crucial among these were the establishment of universal education and the introduction of the examination for admission to the *gymnasia*. This created an unprecedented state-wide demand for teachers and examination administrators that the universities were expected to, and did, meet (McClelland, 1980). Philosophy in its newly-won position as the higher faculty utilized these circumstances to consolidate and seek to extend its influence, while idealism as the darling of the state officials (including the Minister of Culture in charge of professorial appointments, who ensured that Hegelians became firmly ensconced in university departments) assumed a hegemony over the intellectual field (Turner, 1980). The state appointed philosophers, the philosophers trained administrators and teachers, and the latter educated the people. In the case of Prussia specifically, this process of cultivating the idealist ethos so as to gain a bureaucratic-administrative extension of state control into society through the educational institution replicated the pattern set in the eighteenth century by Frederick William I who, as convincingly

demonstrated by Richard Gawthrop (1993), utilized Prussia's Pietist ethos centered on discipline and duty to restructure "the administrative, military, and economic life of his kingdom" (p. 11). One effect in the early nineteenth century of the reforms in education was to dramatically increase the size and scope of the civil service. Education came to be instrumental for upward mobility and new economic opportunity, feeding back into the university system so as to provide more teachers and administrators (who were constantly in demand, in addition to the traditional need for lawyers, doctors, and ministers). As well, due to the process of specialization of function within the philosophical faculty, the university provided professional research as a new employment opportunity: one could become a classicist, historian, mathematician, chemist, physiologist, and so on.[3]

While the philosophers aspired to realize the ideal unity of truth, the state was discovering through the rapidly developing educational system centered on research an innovative means to realize a bureaucratic society: education as a kind of *cultural training mechanism*. Foucault (1975/1979) in the context of an analysis of power describes across educational, military, medical, industrial, and prison contexts throughout Europe the development of discipline as a social technology that is intimately connected with the emergence of modern bureaucracies. Germany is no exception to this development, but in fact exemplary of the practical link between government, education, and bureaucracy. Regardless of the explicit content of what they were taught, students were initiated implicitly into a form of life oriented to a specialization of function that was inseparable from the social and

economic differentiation of society. In this way education in Germany had become tied into economic livelihood in an unplanned but efficient manner that was to prove its major export in the nineteenth century as foreigners, including numerous Americans, flocked to study in the world's greatest universities. To cite Littman's (1971) apt characterization, "Germany had industrialized the process of acquiring and applying knowledge". He adds: "[The United States] raised the knowledge industry from the level of something like the cotton gin to that ultimate model of production, the Detroit assembly line" (p. 51).

A powerful tension runs through the newly defined role of the scholar and constitutes the volatility and dynamism of the research ideal. On the one hand, there was to be realized in the individual person of the philosopher the ideal unity and universality of *Wissenschaft*, such that these enlightened scholars would lead the nation through their expressive enactment of the highest cultural principles and, on the other hand, there was the constant and seemingly necessary fragmentation of knowledge into specialized communities of researchers that divisively promoted their particular fields in rivalry and competition with others. Both the state and the philosophers exploit this ambiguity for their own interests. The interests of the state and the specialists converged in the *monopolizing* of newly emerging disciplinary fields. Success at procuring a research monopoly meant the prestige of being the leaders in the field and the economic spin-offs and increased professional leverage such prestige afforded. The process of monopolizing a field through disciplinary specialization was fragmentary from the point of view of a synoptic ideal of

philosophy, or within the context of a university that became divided into noncommunicating specialties, but due to the ambiguity of the research ideal all these results could be, and were, unitarily interpreted as increasing German cultural capital. The new power of the minister of the state to establish chairs bypassed the corporate authority of the university and appointed researchers so as to procure prestige and status for the state, with the researcher's reputation and qualifications determined according to criteria set by the particular discipline (Turner, 1971; 1980; 1981).

The idealistically-minded philosophers, on the other hand, aspired to the dizzying intellectual heights of disinterested reason and universal truth as the best and highest expressions of knowledge and culture unified by a synoptic ideal. Practically speaking, however, the formation of elite communities of idealist philosophers with a forbidding terminology and rigorous epistemological standards was indistinguishable from the methodological and critical expertise of the specialists. Within the *Wissenschaft* ideal there is a powerful tension between the cultural idealizations of unity of the idealists and Romantics which, following Taylor, can be characterized as "expressivist", and the idealization of the field as the German modification of the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature, which is clearly 'specialist'. The specialists were represented initially by the neohumanists and the far-reaching influence of philologists like Wolf and Boeckh, until by 1830 the Paris-trained experimental scientists returning to research in the German universities joined the growing ranks of the specialists as the conditions created

through the reform of the universities proved especially favorable to the technique-intensive laboratory and enabled experimentalism to make its mark.

In placing these conflicting idealizations together under one banner of *Wissenschaft* as research and claiming the state grant such research a radical freedom from societal interference, what results in actual institutional practice is a one-sided resolution of its tensions through a thorough-going takeover of the expressivist idealization by the idealization of the field. Turner (1971) writes with reference to the humanities: "After 1830 the critical outlook of the new philology largely replaced the philosophical tradition; before 1830 both coexisted in a fruitful if uneasy equilibrium" (p. 172). In a parallel accession to dominance, laboratories scattered throughout the German states had by 1830 displaced Paris from its position as world leader in experimental scientific research (Ben-David, 1971). The combination of neohumanism and experimental science had come to represent the effective reality of the *Wissenschaft* ideal. The state turned from its endorsement of idealist philosophy and encouraged these developments. In doing so it was following the logic of the institutionalized dynamic it had set in motion: the state was interested in the benefits that accrued from prestige, prestige required the monopolizing of research fields, monopolies entailed specialization.

From the point of view of the crisis of philosophy and intellectual life that understood its constitutive problem to be that of establishing a unity, the demise of

idealism signals the last serious attempt to address the problem. Turner (1980) writes:

> Although bitterly resented by philologists, Hegel's system symbolized the philosophical unity of knowledge the original ideology had postulated as the ideal goal of all scholarship. But when the Hegelian system crumbled during the 1830s, it carried with it the universities' last approximation to a unified theory of learning. (p. 84)

The practitioners of the specializing disciplines of the neohumanists and the experimentalists were for the most part not concerned with the problem of unity. Boeckh, an exception to this rule, not surprisingly espouses an ideal of unity that is "one of accumulation, stones added gradually to an ever-growing edifice" (Turner, 1980, p. 85). However, this cumulative conception of 'adding up' or 'building up' to unity amounts to a regression to pre-Kantian empiricism that does not genuinely address the problem of unity but defers it to synonyms which stand in for the concept of unity. Like a repetition of Hume, this additive conception of unity redescribes the problem instead of addressing it: the difference between an aggregate and a unity, or a succession and a change, or a bundle and a form, cannot be quantitative. The first term in each pairing cannot become the second term through 'adding' something. This problematic, additive conception of a *cumulative ideal* of unity accurately describes the manner in which the idealization of the field as an inherently *naturalistic* approach to knowledge is a response to the crisis of philosophy. It accepts that knowledge is presently fragmented, implying that either a lack of unity is not a problem or that the problem of unity will resolve itself 'later'. In classically positivist fashion, it uncritically assumes an ideology of progress, disavows reflection, and defers the problem to the future (for this

characterization of positivism, see Habermas, 1968/1971). If the constitutive problem for philosophy in these decades is indeed the problem of unity as I claim, and the modern disciplinary order addresses the problem by entrenching it within its very own institutional organization, then the year 1830 marks not merely the emergence of research, but also the end of philosophy.[4]

Further complicating the problem of unity in relation to the demise of idealist philosophy is the fact that idealism itself could convincingly be characterized as specialized. It is only from within the idealist perspective that their claims obtain universally. From the philologist's or chemist's perspective, idealist philosophy was an esoteric and abstruse speculative pursuit that constituted just another field of research with its own specialized and discipline-specific techniques, norms, vocabulary, methods, and mode of inquiry. From the point of view of the various German states the ideals of unity, universality, synoptic overview, and philosophy as arbiter of truth, are a politically-suitable rhetorical gloss insofar as they were conjoined to a powerful nationalistic impulse that encouraged patriotic sentiment. The import of this rhetoric and sentiment should neither be sold short nor removed from its pre-unification context (as post-unification, the ideology of German nationalism and patriotism in being conjoined to the political reality of a newly emerging nation-state takes on a darker significance). In addition, idealist philosophy held the function of creating a new type of bureaucratic elite class to administer a modernizing Germany (which Ringer (1969) dubs "mandarins"; see also McClelland (1980)). Just as other fields underwent the

inclusionary/exclusionary boundary demarcation process of professionalizing/preempting those who met or did not meet the standards of their discipline, the various governing bodies of the German states could stock their civil service 'field'. The state through its power of appointment used the gate-keeping device afforded by the now-higher faculty of philosophy. In this way the latter in its disinterested pursuit of universal truth and its creative realization of the highest ideals of personality, culture, and German nationalistic consciousness, trained an elite cadre that was in turn responsible for 'training' the nation through the 'mechanism' of education into the bureaucratic, scientistic, and secular culture characteristic of modernity.

Experimental science as *Wissenschaft*

The story of idealism's usefulness to the state and its demise makes clear the important role state interest played in the evolution of the modern university and that its promotion of idealist philosophy extended only insofar as the latter served its interest (quite outside the philosophers' exhortations of disinterested reason). By the time of Hegel's death in 1831 a research generation had passed since the founding of the Berlin University and the synoptic ideal of unity, which had in practice always been a fractious, torn, and tentative possibility despite its proponents' rhetorical claims to the contrary, was also laid to rest and replaced by a cumulative ideal that accepted the fragmentation of knowledge and deferred the problem of unity into the future. But the descent of idealism corresponds to the ascent of experimental science, the last strand of the multi-faceted *Wissenschaft* ideal to be examined. How the avowedly utilitarian experimental approach imported

from Paris enters the anti-French, anti-utilitarian German university scene and in very short order comes to define *Wissenschaft* and assume its mantle of disinterested research is the final component needed for assessing the philosophical significance of the disciplinary order.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the ascendance of idealism, Romanticism, and neohumanism within Germany was antithetical to the experimentalist orientation, and there is a widespread pattern of travel to Paris and apprenticeship in the laboratories of the *écoles* prior to returning to Germany. The chemists Liebig in Giessen, Wöhler in Göttingen, and Bunsen in Marburg all take this route (Ashby, 1958, pp. 24-25). The experimentalists have to labor under the imperious dominance of idealism and the anti-utilitarian ethos that viewed their work as "an imported French evil" (Turner, 1982, p. 160). The dominance of philosophy entailed that specialists like the experimenters pursue their particular disciplinary specialization under the rubric of *Wissenschaft*, at least nominally, in order to seek promotion and prestige through appointment within the philosophical faculty and so gain the coveted freedom for the pure pursuit of research. In the context of the hegemony of idealism there was bitter antagonism on the part of the experimental scientists towards its perceived metaphysics, its speculative *Naturphilosophie*, its 'system-mongering', its demagoguery, and so on. The chemist Liebig, who upon returning from his study in Paris sets up the world's first university-sponsored laboratory in Giessen in the 1920s, described *Natuurphilosophie* as "that pestilence, the black death of the century" (Turner,

1982, p. 131). The conditions of adversity of the anti-utilitarian ethos and idealist hegemony under which the experimentalists labor clearly lent a greater vehemence to their polemical responses, but also a greater perseverance to their efforts. This proves to maximally realize the research potential put into place by the educational innovations that had been implemented in the German states, decisively consolidating the idealization of the field as the basis of the disciplinary order.

Forced by circumstance to hitch their experimental wagon to that of the proponents of *Wissenschaft*, *Bildung*, *Kultur*, etc., the experimental scientists quickly translate the ideal of research, understood as a calling of the highest order that builds one's moral character and demands the most profound concentration of will and exertion for the sake of knowledge and truth, into an unheard-of industriousness and devotion within the laboratory, and in turn, high productivity. Numerous references to the astonishing phenomenon of the Germans' "single-minded, almost fanatical, devotion" (Ashby, 1958, p. 24) to research resound throughout nineteenth century accounts of visitors to German universities. The anecdote of Liebig's burning his students' bared forearms with formic acid to initiate them into the laboratory as proof of their devotion, whether true or not, vividly evokes the sense of dedication to *Wissenschaft* as well as the particular style in which the experimentalists interpreted the ideal (Morell, 1972, p. 38). Similarly, in an independent repetition of Wolf's successful tactic of utilizing success to flaunt tradition, Liebig manages to waive administrative requirements (such as classics) for his students towards their degrees (Turner, 1982).

Morell (1972) makes the point with regards to Liebig's chemistry laboratory, although it extends to all the experimental sciences, that a fundamental advantage of the new research-intensive teaching/training approach made it possible for mediocre as well as brilliant students to master the basic techniques and reliably reproduce the base-line experimental effects necessary for replication of results. They could also contribute to the production of more advanced phenomena, would publish occasionally, and were constantly involved in a broad range of laboratory work. Unlike the text-dependent work of thinking in the humanities disciplines, the possibility of being a mediocre student still able to take part in advanced intellectual work due to the technical aspect of laboratory work meant that experimental science appealed to a broader spectrum of the population (Morell, 1972). The laboratory, analogous to the philological seminar, was the site for intensive training of students in close proximity to the master and inculcation of that research institute's specific standards, methods, and techniques. These were all prerequisite to monopolizing a specialization within a research field. The more successful this monopoly was the more those standards, methods, and techniques defined the field and the discipline; thus, as Wolf did for philology, the chemist Liebig serves a similar role as the paradigmatic historiographic case study for the emergence of experimental science in Germany (Morell, 1972; Turner, 1982).

As discussed above (pp. 45-52), the strong resistance of the neohumanist disciplines of philology, history, and the classics to the dominance of philosophy evident

throughout the process of their reinventing themselves as specialized research disciplines manifested in terms of processes of professionalization, pre-emption, supercession, and monopolization of their field. This institutional pattern tied the investigative community, its mode of inquiry and standards of criticism, and a naturalistically-given field together in a reciprocally defining manner I have called the *idealization of the field.* The experimental sciences take advantage of this state-supported institutional opportunity in exemplary and entrepreneurial fashion by exploiting the unforeseen consequences of the conjunction of the *technical aspect* of their experimental work (which had recommended it to utilitarian interpretation and rendered it suspect to German philosophy) to the *Wissenschaft* ideal of disinterested research, and in so doing perfect the pattern of disciplinary specialization.

To cite the paradigmatic case of Liebig, the major coup in advancing the experimentalist cause was his procuring recognition of the publication of the results of 'basic' experimental analyses as an integral part of *Wissenschaft* and not merely technical work. He had to do so in the face of a steady stream of vitriolic criticism. Turner (1982) paraphrases a polemical attack on Liebig from a traditional, that is philosophically-minded, chemist as follows:

> That Liebig's supporters and students could regard the stream of meaningless, disconnected, wholly empirical vegetable analyses that flow from his laboratory as contributions to science only proves their ignorance of chemical fundamentals. ...For these students 'to work' is synonymous with 'to analyze'. (pp. 160-1)

The newly emerging science as exemplified by experimental research would continue to incite antagonism from philosophers, idealists, Romantics, and the neohumanists. This was no doubt in part due to jealousy over the success of experimentalists like Liebig, Wohler, Müller, and others. The railing against the "ease" of Liebig's analyses, and "accordingly the ease of arriving at... so-called discoveries" as the reason for his laboratory attracting "the many young people who crowd Liebig from all sides" (cited in Turner, 1982, p. 161) can certainly be interpreted this way. But among other things what is at stake here is precisely the emergence of disciplinarity and all the problems of evaluation that it raises. In the context of philosophy as the higher faculty embodying *Wissenschaft*, as the only faculty where pure research was undertaken, and the faculty where the standard for creative discovery would be, for example, disclosure of the universal realization of Reason in History, that chairs of philosophy go to a Liebig or a Müller who support the publication of a "meaningless, disconnected, empirical vegetable analysis" by a mediocre student in their lab as a "discovery" strains the credulity and threatens the very existence of philosophy. But the power of appointment lay with the state through its Minister of Culture and the traditional philosophers were fighting a losing battle, for while the argument that productivity is not equivalent to quality, depth, or truth is true, productivity proves a far easier administrative and bureaucratic criterion to establish and evaluate. And the number of applicants to a laboratory scores more telling points for setting the standards for creative discovery with the administrator or the bureaucrat than does a transcendental argument. There is, if you like, a *bureaucratic collusion* between the technical aspect of

experimental laboratory work that translated into productivity and the interests of the modernizing state that nineteenth century Germany chances upon that allows them to realize a scientific research system that becomes the envy of the rest of the world, and which had eluded the conscious attempts of the Enlightenment *philosophes* of Britain and France. By 1830 the success of the new German system of research as represented by the experimental sciences was such that they had surpassed the laboratories of Paris (Ben-David, 1971). For the rest of the century, German science grew at a prodigious rate and was acknowledged as the best in the world.

What remains to be disentangled as specific to experimental science is its distinctive contribution to the *Wissenschaft* ideal in terms of how the *technical aspect* of its work proves so well-favored to maximally exploit the institutional pattern of the idealization of the field. The easiest means to disentangle the distinctiveness of experimentalism's technical aspect is by way of comparison to the humanistic disciplines that also pursued specialization. A fundamental difference between humanistic study and experimental technique obtains in the latter's being an instrumental manipulation of some 'matter' requiring a practical consensus on methodological affairs such as measures, weights, scales, and so on in order to derive standards by which the research community abides. In comparison, non-experimental techniques refer to a textual (or textual-analogous) subject matter, such as an idea, an aesthetic representation, a procedure of formal logic, an argument, and so on, that allow standards of interpretation to be established through

criticism and argument that cannot be reduced to or summarized by an instrument or measure. They instead require the student's mental reconstruction of the criticism and argument. Experimental science undoubtedly contains a significant portion of sheer *work* which is intellectual in the sense of a craft-knowledge or mastery (Ravetz, 1971). It requires a practical familiarity with the instruments and with the manipulations of the materiality of the subject matter, a process that as Michael Polanyi (1958) has shown involves a substantial degree of "tacit knowledge" which is a learning-by-doing. The product of this experimental work is a text – Latour & Woolgar (1979) describe experimental work in terms of "inscription devices" – whereas the very basis of scholarly work in the humanities is already textual and the product of its critical-interpretive work another text.

These technical differences of requirement between technique and *Kritik* are most significantly relevant in sociological terms of the type of research organization they manifest.[5] For the humanistic disciplines the investigative work of analysis requires the scholars' engagement with the arguments and criticisms that make up the 'discursive material' of the texts. Basically, anywhere the scholar can read and has access to the texts will do. Humanities research can be undertaken individually, while the social and institutional arrangements can facilitate the research but are not essential to it. For the technical aspects of experimental science, however, the social and institutional aspects do prove essential. For the individual researcher to participate in experimental science he or she must affiliate with the investigative community. The results of basic analyses, such as the "meaningless, disconnected,

empirical vegetable analyses" of Liebig and his school, are crucial to the experimental discipline as a research community: the results have to be produced, transformed into text, disseminated to the researchers of that laboratory but also communicated as quickly and comprehensively as possible to all other interested or capable laboratories making up the research community so as to test, confirm, refute, or correct the analyses. This work requires technical capacities and instruments available exclusively in the laboratory because testing the results relies on reproduction of the analyses. The experimental scientist must have access to a laboratory in order to keep up to date with recent discoveries, hypotheses, analyses, and results because the latter as 'texts' to be analyzed by the experimentalist can only be 'read', 'accessed' or 'reproduced' through technical means housed in the laboratory. The necessity of laboratory access underlines the indispensable role of *institutionalization* for experimental research. Also, as experimental methodology was honed from research generation to research generation, the increasing complexity of the analyses and its technical requirements manifests more and more the indispensability of the *social group* aspect of experimental research. However, what also comes to the fore that adds an entirely new layer to the institutional and social support of experimental research and to the *Wissenschaft* ideal is the pressure being exerted on the laboratory from the *network of other laboratories* that compose the developing research community (Ben-David, 1971).[6]

That experimental analyses are embodied to some extent in the techniques and instruments means that they can be transposed and reproduced in other laboratories.

The laboratory must be connected to other operating laboratories in a communicative network of live exchange. Outside the daily work in individual laboratories it is the research network of the entire disciplinary community which disseminates results, analyses, techniques, and actual instruments and materials that is crucial for advancing discoveries and maintaining the standards of criticism of the field, underlining the indispensable need for an institutionalization to support not only the individual laboratories *but also the research networks* they collectively constitute. Placed into the context of the reformed educational system spearheaded by the modern university as distributed across the patchwork of German states and principalities of the early nineteenth century, the social and institutional demands engendered by the technical aspects specific to the experimental sciences augment the processes of disciplinary specialization and field monopolization with the process of creating and proliferating communicative networks of research that rely not on any specific institution or university but on the overall institutional infrastructure.

At this point this chapter's long excursus through the various strands of the *Wissenschaft* ideal and the social and educational context of Germany rejoins the sociological history of science of the first chapter that followed Joseph Ben-David's analysis. For Ben-David (1971) argues that it is not the specific planned arrangements internal to the German institution that matter for self-sustaining scientific research but rather the unintentional and unplanned possibilities latent to

the institutional *infrastructure* which develop due to the peculiarity of Germany's *decentralized* political context.

The emergence of the disciplinary order of research

Ben-David's (1971) analysis, which is focused exclusively on the emergence of science as autonomously self-supporting and not on scholarship in general, stresses the fundamental fact stemming from Germany's patchwork of political entities that 'the state' was not a centralized monolithic authority. Rather, in the context of a number of polities that therefore constitute an economically and politically decentralized market, individual state-sponsored universities in the German context prove to depend on factors of rivalry, competition, and possibility *external to* the particular state since scholars were free to move and take up positions in other German universities. Due to the existence of the *selectivity* of this extra-institutional market and the networks of connections and communication the market is able to engender through the existence of the institutional infrastructure of the German university system, the quality of scientific research continues, within constraints of the institutional system, the market, and state support, to be driven higher. The high quality is evidence of its intellectual prestige and economic worth, which are inseparable from its particular form of practical organization (the research institute with its accompanying seminar and/or laboratory training, the *Habilitation* requirement, the *Privatdozent* option, the specialized journal, the steady production of publications and/or results). The selective economic mechanism put into operation through the highly competitive academic market of a politically decentralized Germany promotes specialization through feeding the capability of a

particular school to monopolize its field. In the space of decades following the establishment of the modern research university, the faculty of philosophy comes to be internally differentiated in terms of the multiple specialized research communities that constitute the disciplinary order of research.

The state further entrenched the professionalizing and specializing trends that marked the emergence of independent disciplines as the appointment criteria employed by the Ministry of Culture relied on peer expertise for the standards of evaluation of scholarly reputation. Reliance on peerage and expertise in particular fields bypassed the local university's internal politics as well as broader philosophical considerations, a pattern that undoubtedly favored quality research institutes but at the cost of dividing the universities into collections of noncommunicating specializations (Turner, 1980). The high productivity of the technique-intensive laboratory marks experimental research as favored to win out over the numerous other so-called philosophical competitors vying for recognition and promotion under the auspices of *Wissenschaft*, which indeed by the 1830s it does. Also, the sociological implications of the technical aspect of laboratory work feed into the creation and maintenance of an experimental community researching their field distributed throughout the German states as a specialized discipline in the form of a research network. Due precisely to its form as a distributed network the discipline and its star researchers are empowered to effect change and influence in the interests of their discipline (whether of assuring or consolidating a monopoly on the field or of attempting to direct the direction of future research), bypassing the

local politics of the university *and* the local politics of the state. Taylor's description of the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature in terms of the radical freedom of a disengaged, self-defining subject has been transposed through the idealization of the field onto the level of the disciplinary community. Research disciplines, by virtue of their monopolization of a specialized field understood as naturalistically given and hence as a nontraditional source of authority, utilize their expertise and the privilege of the ideal of freedom to disengage themselves from the social order and define themselves on their own terms. Economically, the consequence could be described in terms of a self-generating process of internal differentiation through professional specialization that amounts to a principle of growth through a division of labor. Ben-David (1971) summarizes his thesis:

> Thus competition among the universities and the mobility ensuing from it created an effective network of communications and an up-to-date public opinion in each field that forced the universities to initiate and maintain high standards. It was the interuniversity networks of communication and public opinion in the different fields, and not the formal bodies of the university, that represented the scientific community. The pressures of this informal community (which arose and gained influence as a result of the working of the decentralized system), rather than the corporate structure of the university ensured that academic policies were guided by the needs and potentialities of creative research. (p. 123)

Unlike Britain or France, Germany's form of institutionalizing science proves capable of sustaining broader cultural support. The institutionalizing of the *Wissenschaft* ideal within the university system gave researchers the freedom from the pressures of societal interest they needed to pursue their research, while the state involvement in university appointments gave them freedom from the local corporate interests of the universities. The decentralized nature of the German political patchwork countered individual state interests sufficiently to allow

emerging new disciplines to pursue their own research interests with an unprecedented degree of success if they specialized, monopolized their field, and developed a self-sustaining research community defining an autonomous discipline.[7] Through the demands to specialize and monopolize placed upon the research community as manifest in processes of network development and ongoing disciplinary fissioning through specialization, the manner in which the German institutional infrastructure could 'sustain' cultural support comes to the fore. It is not through a process of continuous successful patronage of extant social groups (as had been attempted and failed in Britain and France) but through the unplanned convergence of research interest and state interest in the creation of a new, bureaucratic society through education as a cultural training mechanism.

The collusion of economic possibility with governmental appointment policy, which plays a key role in driving the specialization of function within the German philosophy faculty, also serves to select out those intellectual styles that conflict with the economic criteria. This manifests more and more clearly over the course of the nineteenth century, winnowing out generalists, speculative overviews, and erasing philosophy's claim to arbiter of truth while preferentially favoring experimental practice over humanistic criticism as increasingly representative of *Wissenschaft*. Within the decentralized German academic context there is an immediate economic pay-off in terms of research careers for experimental work. Positivism replaces idealism as the hegemonic philosophical perspective, and

mechanist-materialist explanation gains ascendance in its long-running battle with vitalism (Ermarth, 1978, Ch. 1; Mandelbaum, 1971).

The dynamism and growth of research through the extension of research fields and their proliferation through a constant process of disciplinary fission through specialization does not therefore guarantee its permanence. Rather, as with the temporary hegemony of idealism within philosophy, growth depends on the scope of socioeconomic possibilities and constraints that the state together with the university researchers exploit until the space of the former are saturated and the limits of the latter reached. In a decentralized, pre-unity Germany of the nineteenth century, this meant a period of several decades of rapid and impressive growth for experimental science that overlapped with actual research excellence (for the latter Ben-David (1971) offers the dates 1825 to 1870 (p. 125)).[8] However, the proliferation of experimental research across Germany throughout these several decades brings about further unexpected consequences. In addition to the ever-increasing, ongoing scientific progress engendered by research, the feasibility of industrial and technological applications start to emerge by the second half of the nineteenth century (Haber, 1971; Nye, 1996). These developments cement the institutional infrastructure of the modern disciplinary order and the dominance of the experimental approach of the natural sciences within that order, as well as the hegemony of their positivist self-understanding and the mechanistic-materialistic modes of explanation that accompanied this approach.

Economically, the speed and productivity inadvertently discovered within the experimental laboratory begins to translate into technically-applicable results in the second half of the nineteenth century (Haber, 1971; Manicas, 1987; Nye, 1996).[9] What had been inadvertently discovered through attaching experimental science to the anti-utilitarian *Wissenschaft* ideal is not the Kuhnian (1962) notion of "puzzle-solving" as characteristic of "normal science" (which had already been around for some centuries), but the necessity of an institutional infrastructure supporting a social organization oriented around long-term, research-intensive inquiry to sustain and guarantee such "normal" scientific productivity. The combination of freedom for pure, disinterested research, conjoined to a fervent, long-term dedication that allowed the researcher to persevere despite numerous short-term setbacks and frustrations of scientific study had led to an extraordinary productivity and technical application. There is some truth to Morell's (1972) claim that "the era of Big Science began at Giessen in the early 1840s" (p. 28).

Conclusion: The transplanting of the modern research university to America

Over the course of the nineteenth century, then, beginning with philosophy's displacement of law, medicine, and theology in the position of the higher faculty, a continuous process of disciplinary formations through the cultivation of research specializations within philosophy occurs. The dynamism set off by this process of disciplinary differentiation, aided and abetted in complex ways by the role of the state and the economy relative to the newly-emerging institutional infrastructure of the educational system headed by the modern university effects in turn the displacement of philosophy by experimental natural science. By the time of the

United States' adoption of German research after the Civil War the appearance of numerous independent disciplines composing the modern order of research as well as the idealization of the field which this disciplinary order presupposes were taken in a *normative sense* as defining science and the modern university. This is also the time of the emergence of the social or human sciences as newly-appearing disciplinary specializations. *Wissenschaft* was no longer a pure and idealistic trans-disciplinary philosophy but it becomes indistinctly the sciences and the humanities as they coexist in the modern university today as philosophy becomes but one more specialized field (although there is a remnant of the German conception retained in the degree of "Doctor of Philosophy" one obtains in most disciplines). Experimental approaches are taken as the exemplar of *Wissenschaft* which comes to be interpreted ahistorically through a normative reading of experimental science (specialized disciplines defined methodologically that have propriety over naturalistically-given fields) that is projected back as having been the essence of *Wissenschaft* all along. One nontrivial consequence is that the social or human sciences (the *Geisteswissenschaften*) come to be modeled upon the natural sciences that are understood epistemologically in terms of method.[10]

The bulk of the American psychologists who study in Germany, primarily in Wundt's Leipzig laboratory were experimentalists who imbibed the atmosphere of progress, optimism, and "single-minded, fanatical devotion" to research (Ben-David & Collins, 1966). Like numerous other Americans, they traveled to Germany to learn, and take home, its world-renowned scholarship and research (approximately

nine thousand between 1820 and 1920 (Herbst, 1965), the majority visiting between 1850 and 1900 (Röhrs, 1995, p. 61)). This unofficial, long-term trend by the educated elite to undertake a pilgrimage of study to Germany waxed and waned relative to educational reform pressures within America, reached its peak in the post-Civil War decades, and constituted a major contributing factor to the transfer of the center of educational power from Germany to America (Hofstadter & Metzger, 1955). Psychologists were contributors to and beneficiaries of this power transfer, returning to America intent on establishing psychology as an independent scientific discipline based on experimental method, and unrestrained in their exaltation of research which was, in the words of one such pilgrim, Granville Stanley Hall (1927), "nothing less than a religion" (p. 338).

In the context of progressivist America and the prodigious rate of industrialization and nation-building being undertaken after the Civil War, Hall's veneration of research was for good reason. America wished to realize itself as a modern society and state as Germany had, through an industrializing of knowledge that was inseparable from 'training' the populace and developing the nation. The Americans more than any other group realized the import of Germany's institutionalized system, perhaps precisely because they "lacked tradition as a source of authority, but they did not lack 'science'" (Bledstein, 1976, p. 326). What Germany had inadvertently realized that proves most radically revolutionary that neither the British nor the French chanced upon is that science as a form of knowledge and a means to realize a new kind of society is most effectively achieved indirectly by

way of a 'training in culture', that is, through educational institutions and the creation of bureaucracies and on this basis instituting secularization, industrialization, liberation, and the other defining constituents of modernization. It is not reform or revolution but research, neither British industry nor French revolution but German education, that proves the most drastic means of fulfilling the Enlightenment aspiration of reorganizing society along nontraditional lines grounded in nature, science, and secularism.

This reorganization of society does not perfectly actualize the ideals of Reason (freedom, solidarity, equality, and so on), so much as realize the rationalized modern state that claims to be the means towards the actualizing of those ideals. Research as a functional differentiation of knowledge that requires an accompanying social organization wherein economic livelihood is tied to specialized fields so as to maximize the mobility of large portions of the populace reverberates throughout a society like that of nineteenth century Germany. The educational system of state, the university, and the primary and secondary schools providing universal education, are different aspects of one mechanism of 'training' people to administer society, as the revolutionary potentials of institutions, technologies, and industry rely in the end on their implementation by persons socially organized in functionally-differentiated communities of specialization. This industrialization of intellectual life which beginning in the nineteenth century understands, in the name of universal education, that all people should be sent to the knowledge factories of primary education throughout their childhood to prepare

them for the research industries of the universities for their young adulthood lacks the obvious dehumanizing and unjust features of the Dickensian drama of coal mines, industrial factories, and child labor, but might still be best understood along those lines insofar as the course of human lives prove circumscribed by a fundamentally economic rationality.

The Enlightenment period in addressing the problem of freedom responded with an idealization of Nature that was compelling in its formulation and revolutionary in its implications. This formulation had engendered a crisis for philosophy and intellectual life in general around the question of unity. The philosophical significance of the modern disciplinary order of research that was institutionalized in nineteenth century Germany can be assessed in terms of its emergence being a response to this crisis. Of the numerous contributions that congeal together to form the contested ideal of *Wissenschaft* the idealization of the field as initiated by neohumanism but ultimately represented by experimental science proves to dominate. As a response to the problem of unity, it addresses the practical aspect of the problem through establishing a fragmented social organization of intellectual life into numerous noncommunicating communities of specialized research. Philosophically, the idealization of the field is essentially continuous with the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature and powerfully affirms the naturalistic subject's radically disengaged stance. It does not address the problem of unity by resolving it, but entrenches it, and transposes the disengagement and self-defining stance of the subject to the disciplinary community. In so doing it compounds the

problem of unity with a new issue: the knowledge produced by the research communities of the disciplinary order which are given their freedom from societal interest and university interest by the state effectively creates and disseminates a modernizing bureaucratic culture where research interests and state interests converge, and by these means science along with the state realize a new secular society. The state justifies change in the name of science, while the researcher appeals to nature. What the modern culture and the new society are realized *against* is traditional society. In the German context the far-reaching implications of this dynamism of change is obscured by the insularity of the research communities from societal demand, the justification for this insularity in the *Wissenschaftsideologie* of disinterested truth, and the processes of disciplinary specialization, competition, and field monopolization as always taking place within the insulated philosophical faculty. In the American context, however, this obscurity is lifted to reveal what I take to be the constitutive problem set by the emergence of disciplinarity: that knowledge (and the intellectual life in general) through its institutionalization, organization, and specialization has become effectively *alienated* from the broader stream of the social life of society, culture, history, and tradition.

> The university not only segregated ideas from the public, intellectual segregation occurred with the development of each new department in the university. A department emphasized the unique identity of its subject, its special qualities and language, its special distinction as an activity of research and investigation. Any outsider who attempted to pass judgment on an academic discipline contained within a department was acting presumptuously. In order to further their control over a discipline, professionals particularized and proliferated the possibilities for investigation in a field. The more technical and restricted the individual area of investigation, the more justifiable it became to deny the public's right to know or understand the professional's mission. (Bledstein, 1976, pp. 327-8)

In the following chapter, then, I read psychology in terms of its particular, discipline-specific constitutive problem of creating a science of experience through the constitutive problem of alienation set by the disciplinary order of research psychology presupposes.

Chapter 3. Psychology: The practical order of the discipline

Psychology's inception in the United States

In the context of late nineteenth century Germany, psychology and the other human sciences emerged against a backdrop of the modern disciplinary order of research dominated by the overwhelming appeal of the experimental natural sciences that had overtaken the anti-utilitarian, philosophical conception of *Wissenschaft* from within. Philosophy *qua* philosophy had steadily given ground from its idealist heyday. Over the course of this withdrawal the synoptic ideal of the unity of knowledge had been discredited while the philosopher's role as arbitrator in epistemological debate and philosophy's function as arbiter of truth were ignored by the majority of practicing scientists. For philosophy there is a perennial sense of crisis rooted in the profound tension around retaining some type of hegemonic status while reconciling itself to the prodigious and ever-increasing knowledge production of the experimental natural scientists as well as their newly-acquired positivist self-understanding (see Ermarth, 1978, Ch. 1).

Philosophy was embattled on a number of fronts as a result of the disciplinary differentiation of research. It had to contend with the historicism of the humanities, and the various species of reductionism stemming from mechanistic-materialist explanation, such as psychologism, sociologism, Marxism, and so on, that made totalizing claims from their partial perspectives. The frequency and polemic of these claims corresponded to the particular disciplinary securing of research monopolies over their respective fields. Numerous strategies were undertaken by

philosophers to address this crisis which was perceived to range in its implications from methodological to world-historical proportions (cf. Ringer, 1969). Many strategies centered on psychology, which occupied the uneasy middle ground between philosophy (in terms of its content) and the natural sciences (in terms of its experimental form, adapted from the physiological laboratory). Of these strategies, most presented psychological and philosophical issues to be a subdivision of labor *within* philosophy, for example, Wundt's programmatic conception. However, a number of the experimentalists (such as Ebbinghaus) were hostile to philosophy, and aggressively promoted psychology as independent of, or even the replacement for, philosophy. These developments were successful enough, and alarming enough, that in 1913 a petition was "signed by 107 philosophers in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, demanding that no more philosophical chairs should go to experimental psychologists" (Kusch, 1995, p. 190). Psychology's struggle for disciplinary independence from philosophy in the German context is an acute and drawn-out affair which only finds a dim echo in America.

The bulk of the American psychology students visiting Germany and the presumably 'experimentalist' Wundt during these decades are experimentalists of Ebbinghaus' persuasion who return to the United States facing a radically different context (Ben-David & Collins, 1966). The question of disciplinary autonomy varies accordingly. Independence from philosophy is no longer the sole criteria for psychology's securing of independent status, but for the same reasons, the radically anti-utilitarian ideological ethos summarized in the *Wissenschaft* ideal of

philosophy that was so crucial for securing the freedom of 'pure', disinterested research (and for the formation of research monopolies) did not obtain in the same way in the American context. Of course, albeit ironically, the ideal of pure disinterested research carried a great deal of weight precisely because of the convergence of state and researcher interest in duplicating the extraordinary and undisputed success achieved in the German context. This paradoxical understanding – interest in technical utility is best served by an ideal of anti-utilitarian disinterest – expressed the confusions, tensions, and ambiguities animating the research ideal. Experimental natural science had inherited and made its own this ideal of pure disinterested research and the tensions that went with it. The ideal as originally minted in neohumanist, Kantian transcendentalist, Romantic, and idealist coin had then become further complicated through its being interpreted in an ahistoric fashion through a normative reading of the dominant experimental practice in primarily positivist terms of the mechanistic and materialistic explanations then in favour.[1] Thus the situation for new disciplines in the American context involved an appeal to experimental natural science invariably in epistemological terms of methodological distinctiveness for the legitimation of their enterprise. Psychology's aim, shared by the other new disciplines, is to gain the freedom for pure disinterested research and its corollary, the capacity to monopolize through specialization their disciplinary field, a process that would prove itself through the resulting knowledge's utility to science, society, and the state.

As noted in the first chapter, psychology's most persistent critic Sigmund Koch's claim was that the peculiarities of its inception as a discipline are the key to its history. The backdrop to this inception, in practical terms, is the disciplinary order of research as institutionalized within the German university system and transplanted to the United States. This disciplinary order was an innovation in the social organization of intellectual life institutionalized by the state, tied to the economy, and founded upon an idealization of the field that had come to be represented by the experimental natural sciences. In light of the institutionalizing processes that accompanied the emergence of this disciplinary order what proves of most obvious and most explicit significance at the time of psychology's inception in the United States is the irresistible appeal, ideological and otherwise, of the experimental natural sciences. This institutionalization effectively masked as 'given' many of its social, political, and historical features through the naturalism implicit to the idealization of the field and explicitly through an epistemological justification. The appeal is ideological in the sense that the predominantly *epistemological* conception of science as well as its subsequent articulation in terms of *method,* were the surface features of a far more complex historical-institutional arrangement, and important accomplices in maintaining its self-understanding as 'given'. If the natural sciences were understood historically in terms of their development, or practically in terms of their research organization, or socially in terms of particular discursive domains, or as essentially dependent on an encounter with their subject matter, and so on, the corresponding conception of science would have been radically altered. Viewed critically in retrospect, the conceptualizing of

science in epistemological terms of 'a method' was not so much an accurate understanding of science but rather an abstract rationalization of its formal and technical aspects so as to emphasize its logical systematicity and give pride of place to experimental work. In a phrase, it was a positivistic conception that owed little to reality. It was, however, the dominant conception at the time of psychology's inception and the view that the discipline adopted. The inadequacy of this conception has manifested continuously in mainstream psychological research, without ever seriously jeopardizing the conception, although it has continually been called into question by criticism.

The aim of this chapter is to review some of the critical evaluations, both internal and external, of psychology and its inadequate conception of science from the perspective of the discipline's constitutive problem of creating a science of experience. Sigmund Koch's work is taken as the best internal critique while a variety of sources are used for psychology's external critique with Kurt Danziger's work (1990; 1997) utilized as central. It is assumed, first, that these critical evaluations will illuminate the key aspects of its constitutive problem that emerge from the discipline's history, but that they will at the same time prove partial and inadequate expositions precisely because of their discipline-centered focus. Second, that when these aspects are interpreted within the broader framework outlined in the previous chapter and situated against the background of the general features characterizing the modern disciplinary order, the partiality and inadequacy of their exposition will be offset and the different aspects they articulate will draw together

into a coherent form. And third, this discipline-specific form needs to be evaluated relative to the philosophical significance of the disciplinary order and the problems it sets us.

Internal analysis. Psychology as "imitation science": natural science as false ideal

The American psychologists returning home from their stint in Germany did so full of admiration for science – as G. S. Hall put it, cited in the previous chapter, "research was nothing less than a religion" – and full of ambition to stake out a field for the new discipline of psychology in a rapidly industrializing nation. Enamored as they were of these possibilities they were blinded to others; Koch (1999) says that "[f]rom the earliest days of the experimental pioneers, their stipulation that psychology be adequate to science outweighed their commitment that it be adequate to a human subject matter" (p. 126). The obvious advantage a methodological understanding of science held was its disregard of history, context, practical experience, and the specificities of subject matter, and consequently the promise to a virgin science like psychology of, like Athena from the head of Zeus, leaping into the world fully developed at birth. But in aspiring to a partial, abstract, and – as the twentieth century has revealed again and again – reductionist conception of science premised upon a positivistic philosophical view, psychology has reaped dismal consequences. To be sure, it has developed a complex methodological apparatus around laboratory experiment, quantification and statistical measures, a technical terminology of "variables", "data", "processes", "mechanisms", etc., batteries of tests, a formal procedure of operational definition, and so forth, which offer an

appearance of science. But the particular methodological form the discipline has taken (experimental and quantitative), the justifications offered for this form (epistemological and rhetorical), and the knowledge claims that issue from it ('objective' and 'factual'), depend for their legitimacy on their success in the discipline's actually becoming a science. This is a criterion *on psychology's own terms*, and in this sense it is appropriate to describe its accomplishments to date as dismal.

In analyzing these accomplishments (from the inside) over the course of his career, Sigmund Koch waxes caustic and acerbic in the extreme: to cite only a few of his favored expressions that he repeats throughout his writings, he describes psychologists as "shackled" to "an enaction of imitation science" that "fetishizes" method and as suffering from a shared "group delusion", while the discipline encourages "ameaningful modes of thinking" (the prefix a- connotes the sense in which it is used in a term like amoral), produces "ontology-distorting" theory, and amounts to an institutionalized "cognitive pathology". These characterizations are certainly hard-hitting. Koch clearly feels they are warranted, no doubt as the crux of his concern (and what informs his rhetorical approach) extends beyond the boundaries of the discipline proper to moral and ethical societal concerns, for the effects of psychology's 'scientific' findings in theory or application carries its problems through to its "human subject matter". Psychology's self-conception, as dependent on its positivist view of science, ramifies into implications for the society of which it is part whether in terms of its knowledge claims about human being or

upon its applications (that have in telling fashion most usually been titled human, behavioral or social 'engineering'). The failure to obtain genuinely scientific knowledge that has plagued psychology since its inception has a significance that extends beyond disciplinary self-interest as Koch (1999) is well-aware. An inadequately scientific psychology's "spurious knowledge can result in a corrupt human technology and spew forth upon man a stream of ever more degrading images of himself" (p. 134).

Coming from the psychologist arguably best equipped to assess the discipline, these devastating criticisms stemming from deep-rooted moral and ethical concerns substantiated by particulate and detailed analyses should make clear that psychology's epistemological difficulties involve issues of significance extending beyond epistemology or psychology. The critical entry point to these broader issues consists in understanding that psychology's failure to achieve scientific status is historically and institutionally rooted in a positivist conception of science in epistemological terms of method. This initial premise, still to be elaborated and qualified in important respects, underlines that for psychology to make good on its aspirations to science it needs first of all to enrich its conception of science beyond purely methodological considerations. In fact – and this is already to begin to elaborate this initial premise – if scientific research as a practice exceeds its methodological specifications, then psychology's failure to achieve scientific status cannot be due exclusively to its impoverished *conception* of science as method. Koch draws out this implication fully. The problem is not just that psychology has

mistakenly fetishized method as the *sine qua non* of science: it is that the natural sciences, even richly and appropriately conceived, cannot serve as the model of science for psychology.

Koch (1999) criticizes the positivist conception of science as method for its impoverished and unrealistic description of scientific practice. This restrictive version of science acted as a sort of verbal straitjacket for psychologists' explicit understanding of their work and their subject matter. At the practical, everyday decision-making level of research in the laboratory, their work could not correspond to the abstract picture of method in which they were trained to think and talk. In practice this resulted in the exigencies of research constantly forcing psychologists to depart from the letter of the methodological law. That is, psychologists necessarily researched according to an intuitive sense of what 'good science' was, an implicit picture for which the explicit methodology only provided a skeletal guideline, and into which terms they would translate their work and censor their methodologically unjustifiable, but practically requisite, departures from the doctrine. Although they of necessity departed from the positivist letter, they did not do so in spirit. Koch (1999) claims that psychological researchers did not in practice follow the explicit method they preached, but rather their implicit model of science (of which method was the abstraction) manifest in practice was the "analytical pattern" of natural science. Assuming that there has been a constancy to physics throughout its development from classical modern astronomy to Newtonian mechanics to postclassical physics, this analytical pattern is put together from the

crucial features that can be abstracted from physics as the exemplar of the scientific mode of investigation. Koch (1999) describes this analytical pattern derived from physics as requiring:

> (a) the disembedding from a domain of phenomena of a small family of "variables" which demarcate important aspects of the domain's structure, when that domain is considered as an idealized, momentary static system; and (b) that this family of variables be such, by virtue of appropriate internal relations, that it can be ordered to a mathematical or formal system capable of correctly describing changes in selected parts of the state of the system as a function of time and/or system changes describable as alterations of the "values" of specified variables. (p. 132)

This detailed description of the analytical pattern of physics is put forward by Koch so as to more accurately describe the investigative practice in which psychologists have actually been engaged. Koch makes no claims of sufficiency or comprehensiveness for this description, but its detail and careful delineation already recommends it as a more thoroughgoing and appropriate conception of scientific practice than positivist construals in abstract terms of method. It is also a better empirical description of the *aim* of actual psychological research as implied by its investigative practices. Koch forwards this description to block the potential response that psychology has to leave its "method fetishism" behind and substitute instead a more fully differentiated conception of natural science to emulate. Researchers have already been engaged in this emulation in their actual investigative practices, even if the discipline's doctrine of method has not allowed them to acknowledge this explicitly. Psychology's "dismal accomplishments" with regards to attaining scientific status do not stem exclusively from psychology's positivist philosophy of science, but from its research practices as well. In this light Koch's (1999) verdict is all the more striking and conclusive:

> The one-hundred-year history of what is called "scientific psychology" has established *beyond doubt* that most other domains [than biological psychology] that psychologists have sought to order, in the name of "science" and via simulations of the analytical pattern definitive of science, *do not and cannot* meet the conditions for meaningful application of this pattern. (p. 133, emphases mine.)

The claim is certainly unequivocal: both the method and the practice of psychology as they have developed are inappropriate to their subject matter. Stemming from Koch's own interests (primarily, in creativity and aesthetics (1999, pp. 43-8)), one conclusion he draws and pushes from this assessment is that psychology must recognize that much of its work, and therefore methods, closely resemble those of the 'nonscientific' humanities. He advocates greater openness, exploration, and collaboration on the part of psychologists with regard to the humanistic disciplines. These practical recommendations underline emphatically that the thrust of Koch's polemic against psychology as "imitation science" is not restricted to its methodological self-conception (although this is central) but includes the unquestioned ideal of the natural sciences as the model for science. Both stand in the way of the discipline's achieving genuine scientific status.

Enriched conception of science: definitional practice

Koch argues forcefully throughout his career for an enriched conception of science for psychology, emphasizing three themes: 1) appreciating science as a full-fledged intellectual *practice*, 2) understanding the scientific investigator as a responsible human *agent*, and 3) respecting psychology's subject matter, that is, human beings, as *persons*, according to appropriately dignified, non-degrading "images of man". Koch does not treat these themes singly. This is in part due to each being entwined

in a close-knit relationship to the others. That psychology's subject matter are human beings as are its investigators emphasizes the reflexivity always present during research, and this clearly informs the manner in which the practices of inquiry are undertaken; the findings and interpretations that emerge from research apply equally to both the investigator and the subject; the investigator has a certain institutionalized privilege relative to the subject investigated that investigative practice presupposes and upholds. This list of reciprocating influences between the three themes could be indefinitely extended. Koch combines the themes of practice, investigator, and subject matter together in a notion of "definitional practice" which bears some scrutiny as it composes the center of gravity of his proffered alternative.

Koch emphasizes definitional practice because the dismal consequences of psychology's impoverished conception of science as method and of natural science as the model for science have manifested most obviously in their creation of a technical language composed of obscure terminology with uncertain or confused referents on the one hand or an artefactual jargon on the other. The discipline's explicit methodological self-understanding acts, as mentioned above, as a sort of 'verbal straitjacket', resulting in a disciplinary vocabulary that handicaps psychologists' ability to speak meaningfully and sensitively about their work, and rarely manages to recapture the depth, richness, or sensibility already expressed in the natural language of everyday speech. The difficult activity of bringing an investigated phenomenon to precisely delineated, finely articulated, and insightfully nuanced speech, was reduced by psychology's methodological self-understanding

to formal notions of applying a rule, technique, procedure, or 'operation'. The skill, training, sensitivity, tact, and connoisseurship of the investigator presupposed for the 'preliminary' descriptive task of doing any science are overlooked, for reasons already reviewed, not only as if these *could be replaced* by some formal rule (a dubious, unproven, and perhaps impossible tenet, which at least has the merit of retaining the sense that such replacing is a task yet to be achieved) but as if this replacing *had already been accomplished*. This essentially magical conception of language, as if to pronounce a term is to create its object – Koch's constant use of the term "stipulation" is meant to draw attention to this – proves encapsulated in psychology's doctrine of "operationalism" that was first adopted in the 1930s.

In the process of its misappropriation from physics the notion of operational definition shifts from its usage in physics, where it acted as an informal description of a way to clarify concepts with a long history of use by understanding their effective meaning to be restricted to equally well-established technical operations. It becomes understood by psychologists as a rigorous methodological procedure that transforms ambiguous terms into a phrase essentially identical with some specified operations, presumably measurable. Based on Koch's examination of psychologists' usage of operational definition he concludes that psychologists offer nothing to assure or sustain this identity of the definition (in words) with operations (in actions). Both the definition and the operations as either recent creations or wholly new ones are hence ambiguous, but psychologists appear to assume that the operational definition by virtue of being articulated as a definition becomes a clear,

unambiguous, objective referent to the operations that as 'actions' are also assumed to be unambiguous (Koch, 1999, Ch. 14). This mockery of descriptive work and magical conception of language, in which preliminary activity a new science like psychology should be most engaged, Koch rightly harangues. Just as psychology gained an appearance of science in creating its methodological apparatus, it gives its findings an appearance of objectivity in describing them using a discipline-specific language created through its operationalist definitional practice. These appearances and their creation are thoroughly intertwined: objectivity is synonymous with science, and there is no methodology without a corresponding discipline-specific language.

In place of operational definition (which Koch (1999) claims is "the one residual element of the old methodological scaffold" responsible for the "scientism still widely prevalent in psychology" (p. 148)) he argues for a "perceptual theory of definition" that involves a "perceptual training process" of refining the investigator's sensibilities relative to the phenomenon of interest, such that he or she develops an appropriately sensitive discriminating capacity to perceive and communicate the presence (or absence) of the 'object' of concern. The force of the adjective "perceptual" is to emphasize the nonverbal, experiential apprehension of meaning by the perceiver. One's capacity to discriminate some property or relation in the world is an acquisition or development in the consciousness of the perceiver relative to the world, and as such, to use the analogy to the act of ostension operative in ostensive definition, presupposes the language-using capacity of the

perceiver even as its practical operation occurs "outside of language" (Koch, 1999, p. 162). The notion of language having an "outside" is intended to designate the nonverbal experience of meaning that occurs when there is a *successful* use of language. To continue with the analogy to ostension, the perceptual activity of discriminating the object indicated occurs "outside" the pointing finger.

To interpret Koch's polemical project in regards to his notion of definitional practice within the context of the modern disciplinary order, he is critically objecting to the unthematized assumption of the institutional givenness of scientific research practice that supports the formal characterizations of science as method. As outlined in the previous chapter, this givenness is effected implicitly through the very institutionalization of the disciplinary order of which new emerging disciplines such as psychology are an extension. Explicitly, it is an assumption psychologists take over from the philosophy of science. This development contains irony enough in that it demonstrates, despite all efforts and protestations to the contrary, the discipline's continuing dependence on philosophy. On this point, Koch (1999) writes "the history of psychology, then, is very much a history of changing views, doctrines, images, about *what* to emulate in the natural sciences" (p. 126), with philosophers of science providing the content of this "what". In addition to this irony, the unquestioning assumption of the institutional givenness of scientific research practice attests to the conviction shared amongst philosophers and psychologists that the 'nature' of scientific inquiry was already pre-established and need only be brought to bear upon an also pre-existing 'field'. The industriousness

of psychological researchers would animate the mechanism of inquiry understood in terms of formal rules, decision procedures, methodological convention, and so on, and gradually shed light on its field. This conviction (if such it is), is none other than a new description of the idealization of the field described in Chapter Two. As the premise of the disciplinary order, this suggests that psychologists' 'conviction' about the nature of their work is better understood as expressing an institution and a history, and that these have disabled rather than enabled psychology's scientific aspirations.

Natural language: science as practice, investigators as agents, subjects as persons

Koch's understanding of a perceptual theory of definitional practice accredits the skilful, responsible, decision-making agency of the psychologist as investigator as crucial, and fundamental to any use of method or language. Agency is fundamental in the presuppositional sense that the investigator has to know how to apply techniques or words in context-appropriate ways. Koch understands the aim of definitional practice to be the careful generation of a discipline-specific vocabulary, discourse, and practical activity of inquiry that applies the vocabulary and sustains the discourse.

To realize this aim, equally fundamental to accrediting the agency of the investigator is acknowledging the inescapable embeddedness of the investigator's practice of inquiry in natural language. "It cannot be overemphasized that at the beginning such questions should be asked in commonsense terms – that is, in the

idiom of natural language itself" (Koch, 1999, pp. 152-3), for "technical scientific languages develop in the first instance as differentiations of the natural language" (Koch, 1999, p. 176). In shifting the conception of science from method to definitional practice, there is a corresponding shift from methodological concerns and the stipulative notion of objective knowledge that follows from those concerns. Focus is redirected onto the investigator's agency (summarized in the use of "perceptual" as denoting discriminative capacity) and a sensibility-dependent notion of language use as the prerequisite for scientific description (summarized in the transition to technical language through "differentiations" of natural language). In foregrounding the dependence of definitional practice and investigator agency on natural language, Koch is also arguing that psychology's subject matter is embedded within natural language. The dependence of the investigator on natural language is no different from the subjects he or she studies. That is, many psychological phenomena are dependent on the sensibilities of the subject, and the phenomena are investigated and theorized dependent on the sensibilities of the investigator. The sensibility-dependence of both subject and investigator is embedded within natural language.

> Natural language preserves and records the history of human sensibility (discriminal experiences) at all levels – from simple, practical discriminations among properties and relations of objects, to the most subtle and "rarefied" and creative oscillations of sensibility in which high-order relational qualities may be perceived as common to a wide range of diverse perceptual contexts. (Koch, 1999, p. 160)

A number of consequences follow from this healthy respect and acknowledgment of natural language. One is that the investigator works, at least initially, on the same level as his or her subject (or possibly below, as in the case of studying creativity,

artists, or 'genius'). Another consequence, important for Koch's argument in numerous respects but minimally relevant here, is that psychology cannot be a single coherent science, but instead at best a collection of "psychological studies" investigating different domains. As a result the best model for science for psychology will not be singular but varies depending on the subject matter of the domain investigated. For example, as cited above, some domains of biological psychology have proven to be suited for meaningful application of the analytic pattern of physics. In addition there are a great many other domains, such as social psychology, personality, aesthetics, or religion, that entail the model for the psychological studies be unlike the natural sciences, but instead "modes of inquiry rather more like those of the humanities" (Koch, 1999, p. 176). Achieving the recognition of this kinship by psychologists is one of the central aims of Koch's criticisms. A last consequence of Koch's respect for natural language resides in its running directly counter to the assumption of the idealization of the field that forms the premise of the modern disciplinary order. Psychology's field on Koch's account is *not* naturalistically given, already formed and defined, but embedded within language and consequently history. It is certainly not 'data', as the positivist underthematization of the naturalistic field would have it, but rather a sensibility-dependent qualitative discernment of, at minimum, a relational complex.

Koch reasons that psychologists carefully attending to their definitional practice will display the inadequacies and absurdities of operationalist definition in such a way as to empty it of appeal and preclude its use. In precluding operationalism (the

crucial "residual element" of the discipline's methodological self-understanding), psychologists' awareness of the acute dependence of psychological findings on their own investigative sensibility – on their skill, training, responsibility, experience; in a word, on their personal *agency* – will increase. By implication, their appreciation of science as a multi-faceted *practice* inclusive of but not reducible to methods employed would expand as well. This also applies to their sensitivity toward their subjects, with whom they stand on the same level initially, for psychologist's subjects are also *persons* exercising agency, possessing sensibility, and equally dependent upon natural language.

Koch's reasoning, grounded as it is in careful analysis of psychology's explicit self-understanding and extant investigative practices with a view to understanding its defects and transforming them positively, appears sound. It above all has the merits of addressing psychology on its own terms and according to its own criteria, blocking the ever-potential *ad hominem* argument in being a thoroughgoing *internal* critique of the discipline. As internal, however, it reproduces certain of the problems and blind spots it attempts to address. For one, the shift in emphasis from a strictly methodological understanding of science to one of definitional practice, despite the insights it yields, retains an epistemological focus. The practice of science is not viewed in its social or political aspects. Similarly, Koch's citing of historical and institutional factors is exclusively internal to the discipline, rather than situating psychology within broader historical and institutional developments. These shortcomings manifest despite the implication, particularly following from

Koch's indubitably moral and ethical concerns, that the problems of psychology extend beyond itself as a discipline and beyond its epistemological focus.

The most blatant result of this insularity of critique is precisely in Koch's limited explanation for psychologist's method fetishism: psychology is an institutionalized "cognitive pathology" whose practitioners suffer from a "group delusion", etc.. Presumably, the awe in which science is held 'blinds' psychologists into an 'uncritical' attitude; they exhibit a sort of 'false consciousness' regarding their practice of science. But invoking blindness, uncritical attitude, or false consciousness is not to explain the problem at all, but to redescribe it, for it is not the fact that psychologists have privileged method as the *sine qua non* of science that is the problem, but that they have *persevered* in this understanding despite psychology's failure to achieve scientific status. This failure has been apparent from its inception and throughout its history, not only to its founders like William James and to its qualified critics like Sigmund Koch, but also to the discipline's most mainstream representatives of the status quo like George Miller. Psychology's failure to become a science has also meant that critiques of psychology, which uncannily repeat themselves from generation to generation, indeed from century to century, have been and continue to be ineffectual over and above their soundness. To understand this twofold problem requires its external analysis, which will serve to qualify Koch's reasoning in important respects and reintroduces the other two parameters of this study: the relation of psychology to society, and its securing an independent disciplinary identity.

External analysis. Legitimating psychology as a discipline in the United States

Gaining status as an independent discipline through legitimating itself in the eyes of society required that psychology clearly distinguish its services and knowledge from other, potentially overlapping, disciplines and organizations. Legitimation required that psychology distinguish itself from philosophy. This was not nearly the same problem in America as it was in Germany, the major difference being that psychology did not need to escape from an all-powerful philosophy so much as prove itself sufficiently different to merit independent status. Legitimating itself in America further required that psychology situate itself as distinct from other, also newly emerging, social sciences, and from other professions such as theology, law, and medicine. As a last requisite, psychology as a new science had to establish itself as a form of knowledge superior to both popular and occult forms of psychology and the everyday practical know-how of commonsense.

The process of distinguishing itself as an independent discipline would take place primarily in the context of the university system's institutional infrastructure, but also and equally importantly through the formation of professional networks, organizations, and societies, and through self-promotion in public venues such as world fairs, political occasions, or corporate or educational settings.[2] A substantial component of this process involved developing affiliations based on the promise of mutual benefits, and for a newly-emerging discipline these would be affiliations with established organizations, whether political, legal, medical, business, or education, to name only the most prominent.[3] That legitimating the discipline

proves separable from its developing genuine scientific status is due to the thoroughly *political* nature of the legitimation process. The potential partner with whom psychology forms an affiliation judges psychology by the benefits that might accrue from the affiliation regardless of questions of scientific validity (which was ostensibly for psychologists to judge, anyway). Of course, there was nothing preventing interpreting the recognition implied in any established organization's forming an affiliation with the discipline as 'proof' of psychology's scientific status. The self-interest motivating the established organization's willingness to affiliate with psychology and the self-interest motivating psychology's desire to establish itself as independent can simply be overlooked. If the affiliation proves short-lived or unsuccessful, these outcomes could be disregarded.[4]

A fundamental support to psychology's drive for independence resided in the discipline's laying claim to being useful from its very beginnings in America. This was uncontroversial insofar as it aspired to become a helping profession, but attenuated tensions insofar as it aspired to a disinterested science. Invoking a distinction between pure and applied science was the usual strategy employed to address these tensions (Daniels, 1967b). As became clear in the previous chapter, the development of the notion of 'purity' in nineteenth century Germany depended in complex and conflicting ways on the development of an anti-utilitarian, disinterested ideal of research that emerged from numerous influences. In the pragmatism of the American context, the tension between purity and utility is brought out explicitly into the open, but at a time when science's research prestige

was at its highest. Psychology established its 'purity' as a science concomitantly with yielding useful results to society that would be 'applied'. The most well-known and perhaps the most representative example of this point of view (long before APA President Miller advocated that psychology "give itself away") is that of the behaviorist: "If psychology would follow the plan I suggest the educator, the physician, the jurist and the businessman could utilize our data in a practical way, as soon as we are able, experimentally, to obtain them" (Watson, 1913, p. 168). In terms of the requirement of distinguishing itself from philosophy, other sciences and professions, pop psychology, and everyday commonsense, psychology's claims to purity as a science were arguments for its distinctiveness. In order to affiliate itself with established organizations for its own advancement, psychology could use the professed applicability and utility of its findings as arguments for affiliation.

A useful and pertinent distinction applicable to psychology's legitimation process can be made according to whether the strategies and appeals utilized in this process legitimated psychology as a research science or as a practical profession; that is, between the discipline's "scientization" and its "professionalization" (Wagner & Wittrock, 1991, p. 333). While this distinction is not relevant for psychology in the radically anti-utilitarian German educational ethos of the nineteenth century, in the pragmatic, progressivist American context it is. Prior to World War II psychology's push for professionalization was submerged within, and subordinate to, the push for its scientization (as reflected in the concept of the scientist-practitioner). Post-WWII these roles were increasingly differentiated and priorities reversed, leading up to the

present situation where psychologists as professionals increasingly outnumber psychologists as scientists, and statistically at least, the identity of the discipline for the most part today is that of a helping profession (Leahey, 2004, Ch. 14). But the basis upon which this differentiation and reversal unfolded was that of psychology legitimated as an independent science, and as a result it is the scientization of psychology during the pre-WWII decades that is crucial (Danziger, 1990).

What psychology needed to produce which would mark the discipline in a distinctive way was a certain type of knowledge. Internal standards of evaluation of psychology's knowledge would be geared to guaranteeing objectivity so as to qualify as scientific. External or societal standards for evaluating psychology's knowledge products – for that matter any scientific knowledge – can be evaluated in terms of their utility. Yet again, the ideological interpretation of the experimental natural sciences set the example here; the fine structure of 'pure' physical and chemical theory develops through experimentation in the laboratory, while engineers 'apply' this knowledge to society in useful ways as evident in the development of the electrical and synthetics industries (Manicas, 1987, p. 204).

The differences in the German context between experimental technique and humanist *Kritik* which were submerged within the umbrella term *Wissenschaft* come to the surface in psychology in the American context, particularly as psychology regarded itself as an experimental natural science. The problem this example sets for psychology is a considerable one as the phenomena subjected to

experimental tests in the laboratory were taken from everyday life for which commonsense knowledge had established opinions and useful practices rooted in experience, custom, and tradition. The natural scientist had expert knowledge based on technical, specialized training bearing on a particular domain of experimental laboratory phenomena that was abstract *in relation to* everyday life and commonsense (and hence needed to be 'applied to' life). But the experimental psychologist did not deal in phenomena that were exclusively produced through instrumental manipulation in the laboratory, but (rather more like the humanistic work of criticism, which moves from text to text) had to *abstract from* everyday life in order to obtain knowledge that would potentially be *in competition with* commonsense knowledge, and if applied, might potentially alter established practice.

If psychological knowledge did not compete with commonsense, it risked redundancy. In order to compete successfully with commonsense, psychology needed a knowledge product whose appearance of objectivity set it apart from, and above, everyday knowledge. Whereas a natural scientist produced a phenomenon experimentally in the laboratory on the basis of, and that needed to be explained relative to, the current natural science theory, the psychologist in the laboratory transformed everyday life into an experimental problem in order to translate commonsense into expert knowledge of a psychological phenomenon. This phenomenon needed to be understood, first, relative to the commonsense understanding from which it was abstracted. Second, relative to its transformation

and translation into a phenomenon, which was conceived formally, and inadequately, as a methodological procedure. And third, relative to current psychological theory, which was in fact not psychological theory but psychology's imitation of the current philosophy of science conception of natural science. Compounding this latter problem was that in the best positivist fashion the phenomenon had to be minimally theoretical and instead deferred to method as accomplishing the creation of fact from neutral data. Implicit throughout these requirements hung the demand that the resultant knowledge be an improvement on established commonsense and everyday practice.

Psychology's scientization, as the context in which these requirements and demands on psychological knowledge production took place, was above all a political process, and it is more precise to say that the knowledge had above all to *appear* to improve on everyday commonsense (that is, had above all to appear objective). The creation of this objective appearance was accomplished through developing a discipline-specific methodological apparatus and specialized technical vocabulary centered on the experiment.

Translating experience into experiment: operationalism, quantification, statistics

Numerous aspects compose the development of psychology's translation process of everyday experience into experimental phenomena. Danziger's (1997) historical analysis of psychological discourse demonstrates that the fundamental, and usually taken-for-granted, employment of basic categories such as stimulation, intelligence,

behaviour, learning, and so on, were adapted from physiological and biological usage, and in this way psychologists usurped their naturalistic and universal connotations and avoided having to address the social, cultural, historical, or gendered aspects other categories might have raised. The two most significant innovations in the development of psychological discourse were first, the adoption of a stimulus-response vocabulary from physiology by behaviorists in the first decades of the twentieth century, followed by a second, more pervasive and far-reaching usage of the terminology of variables taken over from statistics, that successfully replaces and incorporates S-R talk by the 1930s (Danziger, 1997, Ch. 9). The practice of operationalism, discussed above, is clearly instrumental in tying a basic category (such as learning) to the numerical manipulations necessary for statistical analysis through magically stipulating this linkage into being by 'defining' it that way. Confirming Koch's claims, the crucial methodological step that sets psychology's entire activity of translation into motion and which amounts to a quasi-formal conception of 'abstracting' is operational definition.

A major component in developing an experimental methodology, and aiding and abetting operationalism, was quantification. To translate common knowledge into an experimental problem that could be investigated in a laboratory meant abstracting from the rich intricate flux of everyday life some putatively thing-like feature susceptible of measure, according to some scale, in relation to indices whose numerical values had some significance. According to Mitchell (1999), quantification as an investigative activity that transforms everyday stuff into

experimental phenomena contains two errors of presumption: the first is presuming rather than empirically testing "that the psychological attributes which they aspired to measure were quantitative" (p. xi); the second is the error of presuming "that measurement is simply the assignment of numerals to objects and events according to rule" (p. xii). That psychologists commit these decidedly fundamental errors becomes less puzzling if understood relative to social and political criteria in terms of their efficacy in creating the appearance of objective knowledge and hence being useful, rather than if these errors are judged by epistemological criteria of their empirical or conceptual adequacy (as Mitchell is clearly implying they *ought* to be).

Hornstein (1988) offers three points that support this view. The first turns on differences in adjudicating criterial adequacy for the acceptance of theories over against the adoption of methods, relative to psychologists' (perceived) need to present the discipline as a united front. Adoption of a quantifying method enabled a shared focus on practical questions, like ease of use, efficiency, cost, communicability of difficulties, type of instrument, and comparison of measures, quite outside considerations of the status or meaning of the object of the questions. When psychologists disagreed over practical issues, this would still be perceived as psychological work. Theoretical disagreement, however, could suggest the dangerous implication that psychologists did not have consensus on fundamental issues (which was and is true) and that psychology was not a coherent enterprise. This implication was avoided, without addressing the underlying issue, through a focus on practical questions centered on methodological features.

Hornstein's (1988) second point is that quantifying phenomena allowed psychologists to distinguish themselves from philosophers on questions involving overlapping content, a differentiation internal to the university setting and a political move relative to the administration.

> For psychologists to secure university positions and thereby provide an institutional base for their work, they had to be able to convince university administrators that their enterprise was sufficiently different from philosophy to warrant the allocation of separate resources. (p. 18)

Psychology's differentiation from philosophy in the American context did not carry the weight it did in Germany, not least due to philosophy's being merely one more specialized field in the United States university system rather than the singular faculty wherein research was conducted. Quantification, as applied to the instrumental manipulations in the experimental laboratory, was an important marker of the empirical status of psychology as a science, as opposed to the reasoned discourse of philosophy.

Third, Hornstein (1988) argues that quantification had repercussions with significant practical import outside the university setting for psychology's public image.

> The development of a quantitative approach to psychological issues, especially the introduction of arcane statistical techniques and mathematical formulations, was extremely helpful in creating a sharp distinction between academic and popular psychology and in providing a means by which to protect the professional status of academic psychologists. (p. 20)

Quantifying psychological phenomena immediately tied experimental results into the numerous possibilities afforded through statistical manipulation. These

possibilities had been given respectability through the work of influential statisticians Karl Pearson and Udny Yule that psychologists such as Charles Spearman and E. C. Tolman opportunely capitalized on (see Danziger, 1997, pp. 163-5). By the 1930s statistics as essential to psychological experimental design was well-established (Fisher, 1935; Stevens, 1935a; 1935b; 1951). Statistics allowed the numbers experimenters 'found' in the laboratory to be further permutated and analyzed, and offered the appearance of similarity between phenomena as disparate as such laboratory 'findings', clinical 'measures', or mental test results, all without regard for the nature of the phenomena to which the numbers referred. In addition to numbers possessing the aura of science, the difficulties of learning or understanding "arcane" statistical techniques effectively disabled commonsense criticism. Gaining protection from public scrutiny fed back into psychology's development as a research discipline within the university:

> By translating psychological discourse into a technical, abstruse language that only professionals could speak or comprehend, quantification created a category of knowledge for which special training was required. It was then possible to require such training as a necessary qualification for the status of professional psychologist. (Hornstein, 1988, p. 20)

Quantification necessitated measurement and involved statistical analysis, all of which afforded a broad range and variety of techniques to be applied to the psychological research objects produced in the laboratory. This was a crucial aspect in the transformation of everyday phenomena into experimental phenomena, and in their translation from commonsense description into a knowledge product with an objective appearance. It served to distinguish psychological research from philosophy on the one hand, and place it beyond the reach of common opinion (and

criticism) on the other, removing psychological phenomena to a specialized research domain adjudicated by psychological experts. In Germany, the freedom from societal criticism was a *sine qua non* of all research and the entire institutionalized disciplinary order, and thus expertise and specialization was primarily a process of disciplinary differentiation within *Wissenschaft*. In the American context, the development of the disciplinary order, of expertise and specialization, and the need to gain freedom from criticism were a tightly woven fabric, and consequently the gaining of psychology's disciplinary autonomy in twentieth century America has to be understood relative to societal pressures as it does not in nineteenth century Germany.

The practical order of a disciplinary community: psychological expertise

The effect of insulating research from the public by means of expertise depended on training that is not exclusive to psychology. As discussed in the previous chapter, research can be characterized as the gaining of competence, skill, and mastery in a set of investigative practices requiring training and supervision according to particular standards and criteria. These are sustained through a formal, informal, and institutionalized network of communications as a system of rewards, benefits, sanctions and punishments judged, evaluated, and administered by peers. This process describes in general terms any modern investigative community and is a basic feature of the modern disciplinary order of research. The ostensible reason for forming such a community is the maintenance of certain standards to protect them against decline or misuse, a reason that presupposes the existence of certain standards and some potential threat to them. In the German context of the

emergence of independent disciplines shielded from societal pressure through the freedom granted by the state to research, the threat was that of the sheer quantity of findings in a field threatening to overwhelm the capacity of researchers within it to evaluate them, therefore diluting the quality of the results and the discipline's integrity. As research communities, the standards are presumably in place for the sake of the *quality* of the knowledge product, although their maintenance also serves to insulate the community from the general social order. However in the American context, in the case of psychology (and other newly emerging research disciplines too) there was no knowledge product to speak of and therefore neither quality to uphold nor standards to apply. It is rather the case that all were in the process of formation contemporaneously with the establishing of the disciplinary community's autonomy. The implication of this state of affairs, which was partially borne out by the internal critique of psychology, is that the standards of psychology as a disciplinary community do not and cannot distinguish between *what* of its knowledge product is genuine knowledge and *what* is interest in self-legitimation. As long as these remain indistinguishable everyday knowledge threatens psychology's legitimacy. This implication needs to be spelled out in detail.

Making psychological phenomena the exclusive prerogative of psychologists institutes a complex normative demand on psychologists. The production of phenomena based on practices specific to the discipline acquired through training requires standards of criticism and criteria of evaluation. The phenomena produced is evaluated according to these standards and criteria, which do not necessarily

prove to ensure the knowledge status of the phenomena but are certainly essential to the disciplinary community's self-perpetuation by means of reproducing its *identity*. Psychology asserts its identity through an appeal to the distinctiveness of the phenomena and subsequent claims to the knowledge it produces and upholds over against other contending claims, especially those that stem from the commonsense of everyday life. The distinctiveness of the product is guaranteed through the full range of practices (operationalism, quantification, measurement, statistical analysis, etc.) involved in its process of production. This discipline-specific practical order is the support for psychology's claim to distinctive disciplinary identity through which it has legitimated itself societally and the fundamental means by which it has gained its autonomy. To challenge this practical order is to threaten psychology's identity and autonomy.

Psychology has explicitly understood its practical order in terms of a methodological self-consciousness. As outlined in the context of Koch's internal critique this understanding is both inaccurate and inadequate and therefore the main obstacle to psychology's attaining genuine scientific status. Its functioning as a 'verbal straitjacket' for psychologists' explicit self-understanding of their work and subject matter raised the problem of why psychologists have persisted in this understanding despite its inadequacy. Accusing psychologists of blindness, stupidity, or false consciousness redescribes rather than addresses the problem, and in so doing reveals limits to the internal critique. External analysis has brought to the fore that to challenge the practical order of investigation responsible for

psychology's claim to distinctiveness is to threaten, socially and politically, its disciplinary identity and autonomy. In other words, psychology's methodological self-conception can be interpreted as a *principle of selection* applied to its practical order of investigation that draws attention to exclusively those aspects of psychology's research practices that are non-threatening to its identity; that is, its apolitical, asocial, ahistorical, and as it turns out, a-experiential, characteristics.

Psychology's explicitly methodological self-consciousness when analyzed from the outside in effect turns its function as verbal straitjacket inside out and reveals it as a selective reading of psychology's practical order of investigation that is socially and politically motivated to the end of protecting its disciplinary autonomy. To challenge the practical order of psychological practice undermines the distinctiveness of psychology's knowledge product, and leaves the discipline vulnerable to contending knowledge claims primarily from its main opponent: the everyday knowledge of commonsense. It is in psychologists' self-interest to uphold a methodological self-consciousness as principle of selectivity because the discipline's autonomy and their disciplinary identity in which their livelihood is wrapped up are at stake. But it means that psychologists' interest is in principle opposed to everyday life as implicit in the experience of not only others – their subjects – but that they must work against their own life experience as well. While we are no longer engaged in name-calling to account for the persistence of psychologists' inadequate conception of their own work, we are instead accusing them of bad faith in terms of their treatment of their own experience. But just as

analysis overcame psychologists' inadequate self-conception through delving deeper into it and arriving at experience, so a delving deeper into psychologists' experience will overcome the ascription of bad faith and arrive at the social order. To do so requires examination of those extra-methodological aspects of psychology's practical order. The clearest threat to psychology's practical order emerges where the psychological investigator encounters the everyday. This occurs almost exclusively at the point of contact of the psychologist with his or her subject at the beginning of particular research projects (when 'running subjects' and 'collecting data'). The other possibility appears, statistically far less frequently, at the conclusion of research during any attempt at application. As the dynamics of threat are constituted differently in each case, I will deal with each in turn.

Protecting the discipline's practical order: Experimental and applied contexts

The experimental situation and the laboratory setting in which experiments take place have proven the context apparently best suited for dealing with the threatening encounter between psychologist and subject. It has afforded the maximizing of control of the encounter through increasingly restricting the contributions of the subject and a corresponding empowerment of the investigator. As Danziger (1990) makes clear in his study of the historical origins of experimental psychology this state of affairs was neither obvious, given, nor in any way 'natural'. It was adapted from extra-psychological contexts and developed through the simultaneous re-defining of subject, subject matter, investigator, investigative aim, experimentational rationale, and their relations. In the case of the experimental scenario itself, psychologists initially adopted and modified already-

established paradigms. In France the medical clinic provided the template; in Germany, physiology (Wundt); while in England Galton established anthropometric testing based on phrenology (Danziger, 1990, pp. 49-59). In the United States a fusion of the latter two emerged that privileged quantification interpreted statistically. Crucial to this emergence was the radical reduction of the subject's experience – whether construed as behavior, performance, response, ability, and so on – to an instrumental minimum, such as a 'score' or 'number'. Key to accomplishing this was ensuring that the specific roles of the investigator and the subject were asymmetrical in favour of the former.

Clearly one obvious strategy here is the use of non-human subjects that serve as subjects through some analogy to human defined by the psychologists, for example rats or other 'infra-human species' as conditioned organisms or computers as 'information processors'. In cases where the subjects were persons, to effect the reduction of the subject's experience required that the experimental relation in which the interactions between investigator and subject took place be as maximally circumscribed as possible, without of course violating morality or ethics. One means to do so was to insert the investigator into extra-psychological institutional settings, such as schools, hospitals, homes or the work-place, with the psychologist by analogy utilizing the teacher's, doctor's, parent's, or employer's position of authority over the student, patient, child, or worker, an analogy dependent not on the psychologist's scientist role but on an already in-place power structure (Morawski, 1988). In the research setting of the university itself, psychology relied

on the prestige of science, experimentation, the laboratory, and institutional authority to accomplish an asymmetry of roles between investigator and subject. Psychology's research subjects enter the practical order of the discipline through being *assigned* the role of subject, which means the particular performances demanded of the subjects for the sake of research are interpreted in terms of the assigned role that is therefore played by the rules and norms of the investigative community. Outside this role-playing, the person who is the subject is considered irrelevant, that is construed as a passive, naïve, and ignorant subject. Conversely, the psychologist is an active, expert, and knowledgeable investigator. The important effects of this role-assignation for psychology were that the "experiences" of both subject and investigator could be understood in epistemological rather than social terms. Morawski (1988) summarizes these effects:

> Psychological experiences came to be seen as either private or public, personal or shared, external or internal. Personal, private experiences became synonymous with the subjective, which was not only the antithesis of objective psychology, but was itself to become a major object of scientific control and adjustment. In turn, the subjective attitude was associated with the untrained, the misbehaved, the layperson, and the unfortunate and was contrasted with the disposition of the scientifically trained mind, of the "objective observer". Thus the subjective and the objective were most convincingly dichotomized by classifying both practices and persons as either objective or subjective. (p. 74)

The assignation of asymmetric roles to the subject and the investigator, utilizing the experimental situation to take advantage of a purely political possibility implicit in the social structure of institutional power, is interpreted as the practical correlate to the epistemological distinction between subjective and objective; power slips imperceptibly into knowledge. As Danziger (1990) puts it, "taking subjects' experiences seriously strikes at the basic political structure of the dominant form of

psychological experimentation" (p. 183), and he cites this as the main reason why the Wundtian, the psychoanalytic, the Gestaltist, or the Lewinian version of experimentation (each of which took subjects' experiences seriously), were systematically rejected by mainstream American psychology. All aspects of the subject's experience that occur outside the investigative focus as delimited by the practical order of psychological research are deemed personal and private and ignored as "subjective", whereas the investigator's experience is privileged and respected as "objective" insofar as it conforms to the norms of the practical order. What seals this self-fulfilling, self-defining, self-justifying, and self-legitimating circle is the writing up of the research report (APA-style; which is to say, according to the conventions of the disciplinary community). In the report, the subjective is left out; so it is not merely that the subject's experience outside the experimentally-delimited focus is ignored, but that the subject is effectively silenced.

The other contact point where the everyday world poses a threat to the practical order of psychology is in attempts to apply psychological knowledge. Such attempts are opportunities for psychology to prove the knowledge it produces is useful and relevant. However the heavy dependence of psychology's knowledge products on the context of investigation in which they are produced complicates the nature of this 'proof'. In order for this proof to appear convincing (the discipline's scientific rhetoric of its knowledge as obtaining universally and necessarily notwithstanding) the context of application would have to bear a strong resemblance to the context of investigation. For example, in demanding a certain kind of performance similar

behavioral measures would need to be implemented. In replicating a certain type of social interaction a similar pattern of interpersonal relationships would be required, and so on. The greater the dissimilarities between the contexts of investigation and application, the more difficulties with transferring the performances and results, and the less chance of successfully demonstrating that psychology's knowledge product was applicable and relevant (in a sense, this applies to any experimentally-produced knowledge (cf. Latour, 1983; 1984/1988)).

There were two ways to reduce the differences between contexts and maximize their resemblance (Danziger, 1990, pp. 184-190). The first was to model the context of investigation on the context of application, as with conducting clinical experiments within the already-established clinical setting, or with adapting intelligence tests from the school setting where examinations were commonplace or, as with the examples cited above, in replicating the political authority of the extant social structure of the school, hospital, home or business. The second was to alter the context of application to more closely approach the structure of the context of investigation, as when psychologists' success with testing, particularly *en masse*, fed back into the school system which altered its examination practices, or when institutions adopted behavior-modification programs patterned on psychological research. Danziger (1990) offers the following synopsis on the realities of 'applying' psychological knowledge:

> In actual fact, "applied" research usually relied on its own practices with little or no help from "pure" research, and "pure" research either continued in complete isolation or adapted the practices of "applied" research,

> contributing little but technical sophistication and a more abstract terminology. (p. 190)

That pure and applied psychology go their separate ways and become noncommunicating solitudes like the numerous specialized research fields that make up the modern disciplinary order should perhaps no longer appear surprising. Danziger (1990) concurs, as he adds by way of concluding comment, that "the major function of laboratory research was probably the professional socialization of aspirant members of the community of producers of psychological knowledge" (p. 190).

Consequences: Pathology, solipsism, and the alienation of psychology from life

There are three consequences of note with regards to the success of psychology at creating and protecting its practical order through a cultivating of expertise that insulates it from societal scrutiny. The first consequence is political, in that such a cultivation of expertise is highly consequential in that it amounts to the formation and perpetuation of a self-interested professional community seemingly beside any questions of the validity or relevance of its knowledge product. This is most clearly illustrated in the case of the discipline's mental testing of nearly two million army recruits during World War I, an incident which is widely acknowledged to have, as James McKeen Cattell stated, "put psychology on the map" (cited in Samelson, 1979, p. 106), but which when closely assessed proves to have in actuality yielded no practical results to the army (Reid, 1987; Samelson, 1977; 1979). It is rather the case that credit goes to APA President and organizer of the testing movement, Robert Yerkes, whose "greatest coup as a scientific bureaucrat and promoter… was

the myth that the army testing program had been a great practical success and that it provided a "goldmine" of data on the heritability of intelligence" (Reid, 1987, p. 84).

Secondly, the practical consequence stemming from the difficulty of evaluating psychology's knowledge by any standards save its own (as evident in the necessity of bringing its context of investigation closer to its contexts of application) proves a useful process to the apparently unrelated interests of administration. The need to measure performance across a variety of contexts in accord with some regulative norm amenable to statistical production and analysis describes in many respects a fundamental need of any bureaucracy. As the norms are adjusted and feed back into the administrative system this amounts to a self-adjusting bureaucratic mechanism that rationalizes its own practices over time. In this regard psychology could be said to have assisted in furthering the 'science' of administration. The third consequence is theoretical and of crucial concern to psychology in its aspirations to scientific status: has the price for success in distinguishing its knowledge product from everyday commonsense through insulating its production within the discipline's practical order of expertise been its validity? The last question has been Danziger's (1990) concern and in examining his answer both the internal and external analyses of psychology presented in this chapter are brought together. More precisely, the question Danziger (1990) asks is as follows:

> Neither the technical nor the ideological validity of psychological knowledge provided it with more than local significance. Technically, its relevance depended on the existence of a certain institutional framework, and ideologically its plausibility extended only as far as the cultural forms in

> which the shared faith was expressed. The question that remains is whether the investigative practices of psychology could ever yield a kind of knowledge whose significance was more than local. (p. 191)

Danziger's answer is, based on the historical analysis he has undertaken and given the configuration of the field at present, an unequivocal no. Psychology's methodolatry has blinkered the discipline's outlook to such an extent that it only accepts as psychologically legitimate phenomena what its practical order produces even as it is only through adherence to the norms and practices of its investigations that the psychologist comes into contact with this reality. This self-referential bind psychologists find themselves in Danziger (1990) calls "methodological solipsism" (p. 197), and while it has served the political self-interest of psychology in legitimating itself as an autonomous discipline on the one hand, and on the other served the practical interests of bureaucrats in assisting to construct an administrative reality, it has worked directly against psychology's interest in attaining genuinely scientific status. To counter its methodological solipsism Danziger recommends the discipline undertake historical inquiry into the assumptions grounding its methodological frameworks in order to loosen the iron grip methodological criteria have on what counts as significant to psychological research, and that psychology open itself to the theoretical perspectives of other human sciences (Danziger (1990) names linguistics, sociology, and anthropology (p. 197)), both intellectually as well as through instituting formal alliances.

Both the internal and external analyses of psychology demonstrate strong critical convergence. Koch's critique of psychology's "method fetishism" was that it had

led the discipline into a type of institutionalized "group delusion" that amounts to a "cognitive pathology". Danziger argued that psychology's "methodolatry" leads its investigators into a practice that is radically self-contained in an isolationist manner he dubs "methodological solipsism". Koch urges that the discipline recognize the validity of approaches to knowledge in the humanities disciplines and advocates that it take natural language seriously and forego its technical operationalist vocabulary, while Danziger recommends the discipline communicate more actively and seriously with other social sciences and suggests that it pursue alliances beyond the confines of its own disciplinary borders. Koch points out the negative societal consequences in moral and ethical terms due to psychology's influence. Danziger claims unequivocally that psychological knowledge possesses neither validity nor relevance. In light of these strong conclusions from some of the discipline's most articulate critics, psychology as a discipline exemplifies the problem of alienation at an institutional level: its very history of legitimating itself as an autonomous research field and gaining recognition as an independent discipline has been the single greatest factor in preventing it from developing a science of experience. To recover this history and understand the institutional context are first steps in overcoming this obstacle, although it means a radical questioning that puts the discipline and its identity at stake.

In the context of the disciplinary order of research developed in Germany and transplanted to the United States, psychology's institutionalization brings out both the strong continuities across both contexts as well as some crucial differences. In

terms of continuities, psychology's rationale clearly manifests the idealization of the field: a specialized research community, defined by a particular mode of inquiry, that stakes proprietary claims over a naturalistically-given field. In addition to this essentially specialist aspect, psychology has also been instrumental in extending the bureaucratic reach of administrative reality and contributing to the ongoing diversification and specialization of function of modern society. It has contributed to this concretely as well through its development of testing and assessment methodologies, for intelligence, personality, aptitudes, and so on, in ways that have fed back into education, government, the military, business, and industry, to name only the most prominent. And third, psychology has developed itself as a research community through developing a comprehensive network of affiliations and relationships that, in the even more markedly decentralized and competitive American context, proves more economically intertwined and independent of state, university, or societal interest than was the case in Germany.

The most dramatic differences, of the lack of a *Wissenschaftsideologie* and anti-utilitarian cultural context on the one hand, and on the other, that the processes of disciplinary specialization, bureaucratization, and infrastructural professionalization did not take place exclusively within the philosophical faculty, polarizes the effect of these similarities in a dramatic fashion that psychology's disciplinary legitimation clearly demonstrates. In the pragmatic, progressivist context of the United States the demand for the usefulness of knowledge asserted itself in a way unknown in Germany, which for psychology (and presumably, at least to some

extent, the other human sciences) manifested in its primary opposition coming not from philosophy but from the commonsense knowledge of everyday life. The German experimental sciences that became the paradigm for the idealization of the field and the eventual backbone of the disciplinary order possessed a technical aspect in terms of relying on laboratory-produced instrumental manipulations that were abstract in relation to ordinary life in a way that needed no justification given, first, the ethos of pure research in Germany and second, that the instrumentally-produced phenomena were natural. In the American context, the demand for usefulness gave additional support to those sciences insofar as they promised technical application. But for a human science like psychology, the phenomena of interest were not exclusively produced in the laboratory but were abstracted from everyday life. The experimental manipulations of the laboratory needed to transform them into technical matters on which only psychologists had authority. Sociologically and institutionally, the technical aspect was key in accelerating and consolidating the process of discipline formation. Psychology to become a modern research discipline had to produce technical knowledge that could not, in principle, recognize experience or life as valid.

Chapter 4. Merleau-Ponty: The structure of the phenomenal field

Edmund Husserl and transcendental phenomenology

Phenomenology as initiated by Edmund Husserl and extended, modified, challenged, or transformed by numerous successors has represented more profoundly than any other philosophical position the attempt to rigorously elaborate the appeal to experience. My focus in the following chapters is on philosopher and psychologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty whom, among Husserl's successors, I understand as being the most faithful adherent to experience and, explicitly at least, to Husserl's intent, even as his fidelity to experience proves the undoing of the latter in leading to the dissolution of phenomenology through its radicalization. To follow the movement of Merleau-Ponty's thought, then, is to participate in a reflection on experience with a depth and profundity that psychology has to date lacked and from which it can learn and be enriched. It is also to read in phenomenology's dissolution the death of a certain philosophical effort defined by its aspiration to transcendental consciousness which, like a dying god of myth, is not an event to be mourned but rather celebrated as the seeding of a new order of thinking and a new labor of spirit of which the violence, spectacle, and drama of the twentieth century were both denial and expression.

As the word phenomenology itself designates, it is about explicating the reason of phenomenal experience – not a reason that underlies and causes appearances, or a reason superimposed upon and reconstructing appearances, but reason as that

sensible structure experience must possess in order for phenomena to appear at all. Husserl's celebrated imperative "back to the 'things themselves'" (1900/1970a, p. 252) is the appeal to experience in precisely this sense, wherein the "things" (or 'matters' or 'states of affairs') manifest in terms of a sensible structure. What is crucial to this appeal is the sensible structure's not admitting to the distinction between a subject and object, but experience's being structured sensibly in the very relation between subject and object that the distinction presupposes, as an 'orientation to', or 'directedness-toward', or 'endowedness-with', meaning; that is, experience as intentional. The phenomenological attitude, unlike the natural attitude that naïvely takes the meaning-object as given and real, 'brackets' this naturalistic assumption and instead turns 'back' to thematize the prereflective meaning-constituting activity of intentional consciousness the subject takes for granted and which grounds the knowledge of the object. In a sense phenomenology is nothing other than the systematic thematizing of reflection, and Merleau-Ponty's career can be interpreted as working through to this conclusion. In this sense phenomenology is dissolved of any special status or claims and reintegrated into the movement of philosophy, thinking or reflection more generally.[1] On Husserl's conception, and where Merleau-Ponty parts company, phenomenology is not merely a neologism where a traditional word would do but its claim to distinction resides in its aim to clarify the grounds of knowledge through making explicit the indisputably self-evident, "apodictic" constituents of intentional experience that make up those grounds, and through this clarification to provide certainty to all knowledge.

Husserl's (1954/1970b) interpreting the aim of phenomenology in this way demonstrates its strong continuity with, and to some extent creates, a lineage of European philosophical thought from Descartes through empiricism to Kant and subsequently idealism that aspired to ground knowledge, that is science in the broad sense, on an indisputable, certain *foundation in consciousness*. Kant's transcendental turn is the decisive element within this history and the closest kin to Husserlian phenomenology. The essential difference between them consists in Kant's deriving an architectonic unity of transcendental functions based on *analysis* of "experience" (understood normatively relative to the natural sciences of Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry), over against Husserl's phenomenological "intuitive" method applied to "subjective-relative" experiences in general.[2] The latter in elaborating the intentional structures of these experiences in general *discloses* the transcendental unity of consciousness to *and as* oneself, and simultaneously uncovers the roots of the sciences and their normative premises in "the life-world" (Husserl, 1954/1970b, pp. 103-121).

Husserl does not consider argument for the transcendental conditions of possibility of experience as possessing an exclusively formal force that compels reason, but rather the transcendental is the essential constitutive structure of experience that can, as already reason, be intuitively disclosed in experience as its "essence" through phenomenologically disciplined practice (e.g. of the "reduction", of "imaginative variation", and so on) and in this way brought into consciousness. Husserl's 'experientialism', then, does not therefore like Kant's 'formalism',

relying on distinctions like noumenal versus phenomenal or regulative versus constitutive, invoke *a priori* principles to mark the legitimate limits of knowledge 'domains', or set boundaries to our mental faculties. Instead, since the transcendental sphere can be disclosed in experience it can be brought into consciousness as an unsurpassable self-evident essence that is a rigorously-refined possibility of our experience in general: "As transcendental ego, after all, I am the same ego that in the worldly sphere is a human ego" (1954/1970b, p. 264).

Husserl's understanding of transcendental phenomenology comes dangerously close to psychology. Frege's critique of the psychologism in Husserl's *Philosophy of arithmetic* had made Husserl well aware of this danger. This undoubtedly informs Husserl's subsequent sensitivity to this possibility and leads him to understand at the end of a life's work that psychology's "own peculiar crisis" (in not attaining to genuine scientific status) is of "central significance" (1954/1970b, p. 5) to "the crisis of philosophy" that "implies the crisis of all modern sciences" and leads yet more significantly to the existential "crisis of European humanity itself" (1954/1970b, p. 12). This concatenation of crises stems from psychology's not clarifying its ground in human subjectivity: all the crises "lead back to the *enigma of subjectivity* and are thus inseparably bound to the *enigma of psychological subject matter and method*" (1954/1970b, p. 5. Original emphases). For Husserl, everything (literally) turns on transcendental subjectivity, the Atlas who holds the entire world on his shoulders.

> We shall come to understand that the world which constantly exists for us through the flowing alteration of manners of givenness is a universal mental

> acquisition, having developed as such and at the same time continuing to develop as the unity of a mental configuration, as a meaning-construct [*Sinngebilde*] – as the construct of a universal, ultimately functioning subjectivity. (1954/1970b, p. 113)

The nearness of psychology to phenomenology is resolved through assigning priorities to each in order to effect a division of labor. The clarification of psychology's ground in transcendental subjectivity is provided by "phenomenology as *a priori* psychology, that is, as the theory of the essence of transcendental subjectivity" (1954/1970b, p. 264). Transcendental phenomenology lays out the foundations of pure logic, knowledge, and the sciences. The cornerstone of this foundation is transcendental subjectivity, its clarification being ancillary to any psychological undertaking. The phenomenologist's "radical and perfect reduction leads to the absolutely single ego of the pure psychologist" (1954/1970b, p. 256). In virtue of disclosing the essence of transcendental subjectivity, the phenomenologist becomes a "functionary of mankind" (1954/1970b, p. 17) who 'keeps', in the sense of being able to 're-perform' again and again as self-same, the self-evidences of "valid thought-unities" (1900/1970, p. 251). These self-evidences are the ground of the particular sorts of experiences psychology is interested in. Thus the psychologist is then in a position – a conception that Husserl retains throughout his career regardless of the various modifications he makes to phenomenology – somewhat like a zookeeper of Platonic essences, to scientifically "probe" the "experiences of presentation, judgment and knowledge" that are to be "treated as classes of real events in the natural context of zoological reality" (1900/1970a, p. 249; for reiteration of this theme in terms of an "experiential field" composed of a "familiar set of types" see 1954/1970b, p. 248).

On the naturalistic account of objectivity, the object grounds knowledge by virtue of being external to the observing subject and therefore enduring as self-identical outside the subject's changeability. On Husserl's phenomenological account the intentional object as a subjective-relative experience disclosed through the phenomenological reduction to a phenomenologist subsists not external to the inquirer but precisely in consciousness, and thus the guarantee of its enduring over time, the fidelity of its identity so to speak, relies on the vigilant character of the phenomenologist. Husserl (1954/1970b) stresses the characterological demand of phenomenology, describing it as a "complete personal transformation" and comparing it to "religious conversion" (p. 137). By these means the phenomenologist (in his or her person) instantiates the transcendental ego that grounds and sustains the *telos* of European reason, in this way overcoming its crisis.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty and existential phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty retains the basic premises of phenomenology such as the return to the life-world, the refusal of the naïvete of the naturalistic attitude, and the undercutting of the subject-object distinction. But from the start he rejects the programmatic, transcendental, and methodologically-focused formulation of the phenomenological project as outlined in the section above that I attributed to Husserl, and above all Merleau-Ponty rejects this formulation's emphasis on the transcendental subject, purity, self-evidence, and the essences of experience. "The core of philosophy is no longer an autonomous transcendental subjectivity, to be found everywhere and nowhere" (1945/1962, p. 62), while "apodictic certainty" is a

"chimera... which has no grounds in any human experience" (1947/1969, p. 95). Merleau-Ponty radicalizes phenomenology along existential lines, such that by the conclusion of his life's work his outlook cannot properly be characterized as 'phenomenological' anymore (Spiegelberg, 1982). In carrying through this radicalization the foundational project integral to the philosophy of consciousness alters dramatically in a manner that anticipates and influences the postmodern sensibility and that, not unexpectedly, proves difficult to define. His conception of psychology and philosophy and their relationship changes accordingly as well with the psychologist no longer employed as Platonic zookeeper. If this radicalization is considered a faithful extension of phenomenology – a reading Merleau-Ponty himself encourages, while by way of an overly assimilative and ultimately insupportable interpretation of Husserl he also claims, at least initially, to be faithfully extending Husserlian phenomenology – the outcome proves to be phenomenology's dissolution at its own hands.[3] This is the reading I am advocating, for if the crux of phenomenology is understood to be "the appeal to experience" that when followed through does away with the transcendental subject, essences, self-evidence, or the foundational project of a radical grounding of science as unnecessary phantoms it conjured up in its immaturity, then nothing remains to distinctively attribute to phenomenology anymore. Merleau-Ponty's faithful adherence to the appeal to experience finds nowhere a transcendental subject overseeing a pure field of consciousness with an array of self-evident essences constituted before it, but rather a far more limited existential subject caught up between an implacable world and a relentless history amongst a heterogeneity of

impersonal anonymous orders impossible to master: a defiant assertion of self in the face of others all whilst entangled in the pathos and desire that surge up from unplumbed depths. At the bottom of experience, there is just this meager mortal body I live in the midst of this history, language, and time that lives me, while everywhere asymmetry, opacity, overlap, excess, and divergence breaks up reason and its promises, differentiates ever and again meaning and feeling, and leaves us at the end with everything we started from but now conscious that we are, and always had been, inescapably open to the world, the future, and others.

A selective reading of any profound thinker, not least of someone as oblique and ambiguous as Merleau-Ponty, always carries the risk of misrepresentation. Interpretation is caught between being the unscrupulous thief who makes off with only what they need and the scrupulous devotee whose faithful exposition proves, like the map of identical size to the territory it represents in Borges' fable, redundant. My strategy is the compromise of playing the honest thief: I offer what I believe to be a faithful expository reading of the kernel of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy (his primacy of perception thesis), but on my own terms meant to elicit this kernel through drawing out its crucial aspects. However, these terms also form the basis for developing implications that are no longer expository but that elaborate my interest in Merleau-Ponty's work as exemplary of "the appeal to experience". My reasoning is that insofar as my expository reading of Merleau-Ponty is a faithful one (in light of his oeuvre), the implications that I develop should be considered derivations or extensions of his work. To briefly illustrate: I argue the theme of

unity best exposes the common thread running throughout Merleau-Ponty's writings, despite the changes, revisions, and elaborations he makes. For expository purposes, the theme of unity allows both a line of continuity and a sharp contrast to be drawn between Merleau-Ponty and his philosophical ancestors that affords maximal interpretive yield on the distinctiveness of his existential position. In terms of developing implications, on the other hand, the theme of unity can then be utilized to address the thorny question of foundationalism and the relations between philosophy and the human sciences, including psychology.

Through examination of the life-world as perception Merleau-Ponty finds an existential unity of the living body as an action that is non-ego, non-constituted, non-conceptual, and non-thought. This existential unity which is an impersonal consciousness that embodies the world rather than possessing a consciousness of it, is the basis of the mind and transcendental consciousness. The mind "needs simpler activities in order to stabilize itself in durable institutions and to realize itself truly as mind. Perceptual behavior emerges from these relations to a situation and to an environment which are not the workings of a pure, knowing subject" (1964a, p. 4). The contrast to Husserl's Atlantean world-constituting mind is stark in its reversal of priorities; the mind – and knowledge, subject, consciousness, and ego, too – trail after a world already structured in its having been lived.[4] The philosophy of consciousness, that marks Descartes' conception of mind and all the transcendental approaches from Kant through the idealists to Husserl, overlooks the body and based on this neglect overemphasizes the active role of consciousness in

constituting phenomena. Merleau-Ponty's account of perception as the lived body in action finds instead a profound passivity at the center of its activity, an inescapable weakness that prevents the attainment of purity and full constituting power of consciousness necessary to redeem transcendental claims.

Transcendental philosophy relies on reflection above all to provide consciousness with clarity, but reflection's own blind spot with regards to the limits of its transformative capabilities on pre-reflective experience leads the transcendental philosopher – recall Husserl's claim cited above – to *presume* the "valid thought-unities" of consciousness in a "mental configuration", a presumption that usurps its compellingness from the unity of the world as experienced perceptually. For Merleau-Ponty, all his own philosophy – and he would argue, ultimately all philosophy, science, and knowledge – stands and falls with regards to the exposition of the unity of the world as experienced perceptually, for "what is true of perception is also true in the order of the intellect and... in a general way all our experience, all our knowledge, has the same fundamental structures, the same synthesis of transition, the same kind of horizons which we have found in perceptual experience" (1964a, p. 19). Over against a philosophy that accords primacy to consciousness and to a conceptual order that composes its presumptive unity, Merleau-Ponty puts forward his thesis of a "primacy of perception" ordered non-conceptually through the body as lived in pre-reflective experience. Merleau-Ponty's account of this experience's "structures", "synthesis of transition", and "horizons" in terms of "the phenomenal field", which he never abandons, composes

the substance and justification of his thesis and is consequently the focus of this chapter. (In this and following chapters, unless otherwise noted, all undated citations are to the *Phenomenology of perception* (1945/1962), wherein the bulk of Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception thesis is articulated.)

Restoring the world of perception: countering objectivism

In a letter written to Martial Gueroult after his 1952 appointment to the Collège de France, Merleau-Ponty reviews his accomplished work. He (1964a) states that his "first two works [i.e. *The structure of behavior* and *Phenomenology of perception*] sought to restore the world of perception" (p. 3). Merleau-Ponty is addressing two opponents in these works, who in assuming a subject over against an objective world ("objectivism") lose or "mutilate" perception: the intellectualism and idealism of philosophy, which posits a pure interiority of consciousness that constitutes perception, and the empiricism and naïve realism of science (viz. psychology), which posits relations of pure externality between the perceiver and the world that causes perception. In Merleau-Ponty's view, these positions are equal and opposite conceptual extremes that stem from the same mistake of proceeding analytically from an objectivist basis rather than descriptively from perceptual experience. Each substitutes the thought of perception for the perception itself, and as their theories fail and are elaborated along the same erroneous trajectory they lose the basic perceptual experience of the world completely. Merleau-Ponty's response is to retrace each analytic pathway, on its own terms, from its opposing conclusions back to their original starting points, as a corrective dialectic in the sense of showing up their conceptual limitations.[5] The aim of this dialectic is not

synthesis (Merleau-Ponty is not interested in obtaining an ideal unity but in disclosing the pre-reflective unity of experience that idealism presupposes), but rather to show the integrity of each position relative to their objectivist presuppositions, and the complementarity of their antithesis relative to their starting point in the subject-object distinction. Merleau-Ponty argues that their objectivist presupposition is taken from an inadequate thematization of the perception that first gave objects to experience – and on this basis suggested to thought the concept of objectivity – and not surprisingly proves inadequate when used to explain perceptual experience. In carrying through his corrective dialectic (tacking between nature and consciousness, or the in-itself and the for-itself), Merleau-Ponty exposes this inadequacy, as prefatory to the resumption of this thematizing work of describing perceptual experience. Or, put differently, to carry through the reflection which philosophy and science have begun but left incomplete, to a "second-order" or "radical" reflection (p. 63; p. 219), that is to follow their "primary reflection" with a "secondary reflection", a distinction Merleau-Ponty takes from Gabriel Marcel (1950/1960, p. 102). *The structure of behavior*, and much of *Phenomenology of perception*, are composed of this dialectical ground-clearing work of theoretical correction of theoretical prejudice matched to descriptions of perception, and it is in this combination that the bulk and the persuasiveness of Merleau-Ponty's argument lies.

Merleau-Ponty describes perception in terms of the corporeal relations of the body in action to a setting. The significance of these descriptions resides in every case in

their being demonstrations of perception as being a *non-conceptual* grasp of the setting made possible by, and perfectly intelligible through, the structuring of that setting relative to embodied capabilities (for example, as structured through 'reach': within arm's reach, leaning-forward reach, walking reach, out-of-manual but within visible reach, audible reach, and so on). In a perceptual act as a particular grasp of a setting, the grasp stands to the setting as actuality does to possibility: grasping things in one particular way at that moment realizes one possible structural configuration of that setting. Neither the grasp, the structuring, nor the embodied capabilities of what is within reach need be thought, conceptualized, or represented in any manner, and if they were, the idea of each would lack the thick experiential sense through which they are lived and felt when perceptually present. And precisely because this experiential sense does not need to be conceptualized, the thought or idea that expresses it conceptually possesses a semblance of the experience's thickness and solidity because in thinking the idea one is undertaking an analogous bodily operation (again, non-conceptually) to grasp the now-ideational object.

Without this nonthinking, active bodily complicity accompanying thought that supplies the power to animate the word or proposition expressing the thought through installing oneself experientially in the meaning expressed by the word or proposition, all our speech through which thoughts manifest would merely be grammatically- and syntactically-ordered verbal noise, lacking sense. Over against the analytic starting point of theories of perception that start from a thought, idea, or

representation of perception as a sense data or constitutive power, Merleau-Ponty aims to "restore the world of perception" through descriptions that demand one fully accredit one's body as a non-conceptual *power*, as one's sensorimotor ability to see, to grasp, to do things, to take up a point of view or install oneself in a position, without needing to think, conceive, or represent oneself or one's setting in any way. The body defines itself, actively and non-conceptually, as the full range of the "I can" (p. 137). How it does so could be said to be a puzzle, *but only to thought*, for in experience there is no problem: my body is nothing other than that unthinking power that acts, sees, moves itself, grasps the world.

While Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the body as evident in perceptual experience as a non-conceptual power is the major component of his counter to construing perception conceptually or the body objectively, there is another equally significant component to his aim to "restore the world of perception". Merleau-Ponty aims to address both the disenchantment wrought by mechanistic science, and the methodical doubt, empiricist skepticism, and critical thinking that have become trademark to modern philosophy, by a "restoration" that re-enchants experience, returns us to awe and wonder at the mystery of the body, the world, and rationality, and affirms our embodied existence as possessing a certitude and faith that all our doubt, skepticism, and criticism presupposes.[6]

A consequence of the dialectical corrective that overcomes the subject-object distinction essential for objectivist thinking is its disclosing of a distinction between

"the lived and the known" (Merleau-Ponty, 1942/1963, p. 215). What this distinction implies is first, a conceptually impregnable asymmetry in that what is known presupposes what is lived, whereas what is lived neither has nor needs presuppositions, justifications, or proofs, and as a result the significance of each side of the asymmetry differs accordingly. Second, the distinction as reflexive rather than objective does not oppose a subject to the world but divides experience within itself (p. 347). That is, alongside the theoretical inadequacies of scientific or philosophical accounts of perception or their objectivist presuppositions, all of which are of significance for knowledge, there is a basic *affective* attitude that is lived with a significance at an existential level – expressed by Merleau-Ponty through words like awe, wonder, mystery, certainty, faith – that is at stake.

The acceptance, elaboration, and institutionalization of the theoretical edifices of philosophy and science premised on objective knowledge disenchant, doubt, and criticize experience. Objectivism indirectly, but not therefore in a less real or less effective way, entrenches a distrust of experience and life at an existential level. Merleau-Ponty describes this distrust variously, as "a type of doubt concerning man, and a type of spite" (1964a, p. 27), as a desperate self-deception of philosophy, as "a mendacious pretension" (1964/1968, p. 106; p. 120). Merleau-Ponty's project is above all to make impossible this 'closing' of one's attitude to life. As his list of preferred words above indicated, and as his endless recourse to descriptions of perceptual experience as an "openness" make emphatic, the value he wishes to make a fact (Merleau-Ponty's criterion for judging a person (1960/1964c,

p. 72)) is that of human being as essentially "open". We are open to the world, to the future, to others, and through these open to ourselves in a way that no knowledge, philosophy, science, or demand for certitude should ever close off. Thus he can conclude his *magnum opus* (which is a study of perception) with a chapter on freedom, "because I am from the start outside myself and open to the world" (p. 456). His first major work (1947/1969) on politics and history concludes on the argument that good existentialism "arouses in us a love for our times" and "embraces indivisibly all the order and the disorder of the world" which, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes, is above all "*an open or unfinished system*" (pp. 188-9), an "unfinished task" (a favorite phrase from Malebranche which he cites repeatedly throughout his writings). In this light it is no wonder that Merleau-Ponty's paradigm for philosophy as well as favored repertoire for examples is the creativity of artists, who spend their lives questioning the world but never because they doubt or distrust it. Within Merleau-Ponty's description of perceptual experience, the corollary to the body as non-conceptual power is the world as open to exploration and inspection. However to advance this claim in this manner is to put it too quickly. One's power is not unlimited nor is the world empty, but as a magnet polarizes iron filings into a configuration that defines both, body and world as power and openness are structured relative to each other. This structure is the *phenomenal field*. And paradoxically, it proves to be precisely by means of the limits, restrictions, opacities, and blind spots which make up this field structure, as the conditions of experience, that the body is experienced as power, the world experienced as open,

and that none of the limits, restrictions, opacities, or blind spots are experienced as such at all.

From structure to field: first-person description & the figure-ground structure

Merleau-Ponty (1942/1963) in his first work utilized Gestalt psychology's conception of the part-whole relation to posit a hierarchy of structures as the means to comprehend the distinctions, and the unities they presuppose, between form and matter, organism and milieu, and lastly mind and body. The last raised the question of perceptual experience as a modality of consciousness irreducible to either idea or thing but possessed of a "structure" in such a way as to make these alternatives and their distinction possible. Merleau-Ponty concludes this work noting the need to elucidate this structure in terms of a perspectival differentiation enabled by the particularity or individuality of one's body, which he calls most generally "a point of view" and more particularly, the "perceptual field". In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/1962) he resumes and completes this elucidation. As with *The structure of behavior*, Merleau-Ponty applies a Gestalt-derived critique to extant accounts of perception that he works to dialectically correct, but with two notable differences.

The first is that the perceiver is always a person rather than an organism, and Merleau-Ponty adverts, I argue necessarily, to first-person descriptions. Although Merleau-Ponty nowhere draws particular attention to this claim except in passing, it can be inferred from his expositional technique that objectivist thinking requires third-person neutral description, while his constant adoption of first-person speech

is not incidental but in fact essential to a perspectival conception of perceptual experience.[7] The change in speech registers is the discursive parallel to the movement that Merleau-Ponty's corrective dialectic effects. From a third-person neutral perspective, the two registers are clearly distinct as objective and subjective description, whereas in a first-person perspective, the third-person neutral is not a mode distinct from the first-person but implicit *within* it. The third-person neutral register in eliding any observer and positing some situation-in-itself as a mere factual representing of "reality as it is" or "the way things are", could be construed pejoratively as abstract, or positively as imaginative, but the point is that in any case it presupposes the first-person through surreptitious insertion of a witness who perceives the situation (p. 411). The capacity for first-person description reiterates at a discursive level the notion of the body as a power to move, install itself, and take up a point of view, which was appositely expressed by "I can": "language is to the 'I think' what movement is to perception" (1964/1968, p. 257). Recalling Merleau-Ponty's distinction between the lived and the known and his concern with the former as an existential, affective life-attitude indirectly impacted by our explicit knowledge, what the shift in register to the first-person effects is an appeal to *me* in my particularity as a person, a personal appeal to which *I* must respond; my active power to move or for motion is matched to my passive capacity to be moved, for e-motion. That I can move and take up positions, that I can install myself in speech and assume discursive perspectives, is part and parcel of the "I feel" that marks the affective differentiating of my life, of my emotional conduct and scope, my response-ability, my personal identity I passionately am (quite regardless of

what I could, for example through a third-person neutral description, dispassionately think my identity is).

The second notable difference is Merleau-Ponty's use of Gestalt primarily in terms of the figure-ground structure. This proves his entry point into the more complex structure of the phenomenal field. The figure-ground structure due to its conceptual simplicity amounts to a return to perceptual experience, as "a figure on a background" is not a sense-given, an impression, or any sort of elementary building block, but "the very definition of the phenomenon of perception, that without which a phenomenon cannot be said to be perception at all" (p. 4). A vague encompassing blur that offers nothing at all to be seen nor a depth of space in which to move is a strange fiction and not a description of perception. What such a fiction assumes, without justification, is the absence of the body as actively participant in perceiving, as if the perceiver is somehow passively immobile such that vision is restricted to a frozen moment. The Gestalt psychologists would also reject the fiction even as they ironically prove to share the same assumption of passivity in positing the figure-ground structure naturalistically as a purely objective whole isomorphic to the perceiver's brain patterns (Ash, 1995). Merleau-Ponty points out that in experience the perceiver focuses on the figure of interest – squints, cocks his or her head to one side for a better view, leans forward, looks away and back again – so as to make it stand out clearly from the background. The contrastive relation between the focal figure and the unfocussed background against which the figure stands out, is neither an objective fact naturally given that can only be confirmed by a bodiless perceiver

or the surreptitious insertion of a witness, nor is it constituted in consciousness as if the figure and ground were already 'in mind' and needed no actual world to look upon, but depends on their difference as actualized in a specific way by a mobile perceiver's actions. While it is well-established, and common knowledge due to Gestalt's popularizing of ambiguous or reversible figures (e.g., Rubin's vase, the duck-hare), that the focal figure is determined by the figure-ground relation, the implications of this remained minor as long as the relation was understood in the restricted formulation of the Gestaltists. Endorsing this restricted formulation has a number of advantages: the visual structure of a figure on a ground is obvious enough, allows for convenient manipulations to generate experimental perception studies in the laboratory, is easily reproduced for demonstrative purposes or as images in books, and so on (Ash, 1995). Understanding the figure-ground relation as crucially dependent upon the perceiver's action – or more precisely the perceiver's *action history* – ramifies drastically the scope for conceptualizing perception.

The immediately visible becomes arrayed before the perceiver in depth and possibility as a milieu to be explored, rather than as a display present to a passive recording machine. The visual array in turn depends nontrivially on its nonvisible surround, that is, on the unseen yet perceptually present 'behind' and 'around' context that situates the visible. Further, and most significantly, the temporality of past and future re-organizes the *immediately* perceptible visible array/nonvisible surround. Through the perceptible field's being incorporated in retrospection and

anticipation its structures are effectively re-organized through the perceiver, in whose person is condensed and distilled their own individualized style of retrospecting and anticipating. This style is developed over a lifetime based on a personal manner of 'taking over' the valuations of the (cultural and historical) social order. 'Immediate experience' (or direct, simple, elementary, natural, or spontaneous experience), then, *never* means an *unmediated* experience; there is no contact of thing to consciousness that somehow carries its own intelligibility outside of any mediation. Rather, the characteristics of immediacy like simplicity or spontaneity are complexly mediated high-order achievements of particular histories. Perception is not a 'recording' or passive 'observation' of an external environment, but an active *reading* of the world as a text-analogue.[8]

It is precisely because my experience of the world is continuously mediated through the embodying of relations to the environment, to others, into time, and because these have been lived through over and over again, that they no longer stand between me and the world, just as an understandable text is not an obstacle to its meaning. Embodied relations do not become irrelevant to the experience but incorporated into the experience: that a phenomenon naturally and simply gives itself to me does not occur in spite of my efforts, my action, my body, and my history, but naturalness and simplicity are their *accomplishments*. The history that makes the experience possible is rendered transparent in the very experiential moment itself by means of the body's incorporation of that history, just as the

perceiver's embodiment that makes perception of a figure possible disappears into, or as, the background.

In other words, to say that any moment of perception invariably has as its focal center some particular figure of interest that is determined by its ground, is to say that 'what' is perceived depends on a particularly human form of embodiment, of a person with an individual style rooted in his or her life history, within a social order, a culture, and a history. "It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behavior which one chooses to call 'natural', followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world" (p. 189). The restricted formulation of the Gestaltists confined the figure-ground relation within the 'natural whole' of the visual array, but Merleau-Ponty's description of perceptual phenomena expands it into a horizon extending beyond the immediately visible moment, into the potentially visible and into the social, cultural and historical, such that the figure-ground structure becomes a minor premise, a greatly simplified shorthand, for the structure of the phenomenal field. And integral to the perception – yet strangely so, in an increasingly decentered fashion relative to this structure – I find, through the non-conceptual power that is my body, my self at stake 'there' in the midst of this field, affectively intertwined with the world.

The phenomenal field

The Gestalt articulation of a figure against a background was nothing other than the definition of the phenomenon of perception itself while its account of this figure-ground relation as a structure amounted to a shorthand for the structure of the

phenomenal field. In light of these revisions, the strong emphasis of the Gestaltists on particular perceptual figures is to put the cart before the horse for "the figure" is not some privileged entry point to select exemplary perceptions but in fact exemplary of all perception in being its *end* (in the double sense of both endpoint and purpose). "Our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have" (p. 67). It is our perception of the figure that contributes decisively to our conception of the object, and it has been our misconceiving of this perceptual experience that has contributed decisively to our misconstruing the objectivity of the object as independent of the subjectivity of the subject. The Gestaltists taking the figure-as-end as a given and thereby a representative snapshot of perception repeats in miniature the whole problem of objectivism. It begs the question in that it is the very action of perception that 'gives' us the figure as its end, an action that embodies the background from which the figure emerges by way of a non-conceptual grasp. To embody the background is to incorporate without thematizing (and without the need to thematize) the limits and conditions that make its grasp possible. Keeping in mind that the figure is the end of perception, then, means that to describe the composition of the phenomenal field is to work back to the unthematized limits and conditions of embodiment that structure perception into intelligible experience susceptible of thematization, and that this reflective working back at the same time uncovers the genealogy of objectivity.

To say that perception ends in figures is to say that the perceiver's action is one of projecting into things that gaze, smell, hearing, taste, or touch stops at, are caught up in, or "grasps". In the perceptual environment either there are things that the perceiver can attend to and focus on, or there is the space within which things are set that puts a distance between them, and between the perceiver and things in relation to the perceiver's reach. The range of this space extends to the horizon, which is not merely a phenomenological term of art, but describes the ever-receding horizontal limit of our perceptual reach within a vertical orientation of space. For this horizontal-vertical orientational structure of space is constructed relative to the upright postural stance, motor capacity and kinaesthetic sense, and the manner of integration of the sensory modalities relative to the spatio-anatomical organization of the human body. With all these coexisting in one single body, that all the senses save touch radiate from the head – the eyes on the top and front of the head for instance, whereas the ears are at the sides of the head – effects a schematization of space into an up-down orientation, with a visible 'in-front' and a perceived but unseen 'behind', ringed about by the horizon that instates the perceiver at its center. And here at this center is a limit to perception in a significantly different sense than the horizon as a limit of range, for there comes a point at which the body as the source or origin of perception itself proves imperceptible, "the unperceived term in the center of the world towards which all objects turn their face" (p. 82). While I am conscious of my self by implication as all lines of sight and avenues of sense bear upon my body as "the pivot of the world" (p. 82) and therefore spatially "one's own body is the third term, always tacitly understood, in the figure-background

structure" (p. 101), I cannot wholly perceive my body in any act of perceiving. Experientially my body is never made fully available to my perception as obtains with anatomical description in biology or physiology. Parts of the body can of course be perceived whenever they are 'detached' from the body's mode of perceptual action and made into objects of that perception, as when the infant consistently discovers a pair of feet always within reach of its hands for some time before realizing they are its own. But, "insofar as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents its ever being an object… is that it is that by which there are objects" (p. 92). There are two types of imperceptibility at work here.

The first is the perspectival aspect of the field structure itself, the vantage point of a spatio-anatomical embodied structuring, the stylized historied body that acts, "the resistance of my body to all variation of perspective" (p. 92). The operation or effect of this aspect, action, and resistance is always to project itself onto the world before it and realize itself as perception: therefore as the very *condition* for perception it is not perceived but it can be recovered through reflection on that perceived world. This experience of the body that is neither object nor subject nor fully objectifiable Merleau-Ponty calls "a third genus of being" (p. 350). This perspectival aspect also entails that the body is not exclusively "me" either but that alongside whomever *I think* I am, "my" body is living and functioning as an impersonal subjectivity, a "pre-personal subject" (p. 350). My body is pre-personal in a way that is not 'hidden' like some occluded thing in the environment or 'out of

sight' like something behind me. Before it was my body that I speak about in the first person and that defines "me", "the body of this moment", it was a "habit-body" (p. 84), a general, anonymous body that perceived, desired, felt, and willed in the world like anyone's, although I only know this anonymity of the body through an exertion of a bodily agency that I *must call mine*, through an agency I must describe in the first person and understand as a *personal agency*. Even after I begin calling it mine, the body's impersonal generality continues its anonymous subterranean life beneath my own. "My personal existence must be the resumption of a prepersonal tradition" (p. 254). I actively assert my individuality, responsibility, and personhood through installing my self, by means of an already-available bodily agency, upon an already-individualized and already response-able body, and in this way make the pre-personal personal. The body's pre-personal generality is that of a tradition and a history, already involved in a relational matrix with other persons, already social, already cultural, already somewhat stylized, and upon which impersonal subjectivity my person emerges, or as is said, 'is raised'. Thus while my perception is an experience to which I always have recourse, it is also true that "perception is always in the mode of the impersonal 'One'" (p. 240), and the ambiguity of the/my body-in-the-world in this mixed mode (of the impersonal and the personal) is both constantly at work and what avails itself to reflection.

The second type of imperceptibility is more radical for within the recess of my body is an insurmountable opacity not perceived, not available to reflection, and entirely incapable of objectification. Merleau-Ponty describes this opacity as "non-being"

(p. 421) and it proves, like one's birth, to be unrecoverable. It is consequently not some subjective refuge by which I can escape the world but precisely where my subjectivity, both personal and impersonal, founders. In being the opaque center of the corporeal schema that orients my world into a structured sensible space around me it is necessary as the imperceptible condition of perception for introducing a break into, an interruption of, the space and time of the world such that there is a perspective or point of view. As temporally opaque to perception it asserts an unknowable *limit* that cannot be overcome. One cannot perceive prior to one's subjectivity, which is "the opacity of the past" (p. 351), nor can one perceive concurrently 'within' subjectivity the body's "effecting" the very "passage" of time (p. 421). This ungraspable, unobjectifiable font of perception described positively is a mystery, the site for the "advent" of consciousness and that which seals the impregnable asymmetry of the lived over the known.

These two types of imperceptibility as the conditions and limits of perception do not mean that the corporeal schema is arbitrary but rather that it is dependent upon my embodiment. The schema is not conceptualized or represented as such, nor is it static, but given the non-conceptual motor capacity of my body, with which the sensory is always indivisibly conjoined, it is effortlessly enacted as 'the present world' in 'categories' of more or less available to be explored, more or less accessible to inspection, enabling or refusing perusal, and so on. The possibilities of movement through my body are in a relation of reciprocal definition to the space of the world, which as noted above I cannot escape, since there is no need for escape

as I am not opposed to the world: in favored terms of Merleau-Ponty's, I "inhabit" or "haunt" the world. In a word, the world is present to me as an open field, into which and for the sake of which I am always losing myself. I do not lose myself to the world willfully, but this is the very action of the body that lives me. Nor do I do so consciously as the body is the very condition for consciousness.

There is a difference between the life of the general, anonymous body – although I rightfully call it mine, even as I rely on it rather than possess it – and my life as a particular subject, an individual person. The significance of this difference resides in its being a *division within my self*, whereas the non-conceptual action of the body in perception on which I inescapably rely signifies continuously to me that there is no division between my self and the world. While "the theory of the body is already a theory of perception" (p. 203), the result is that "the body… will finally reveal to us *the perceiving subject as the perceived world*" (p. 72. Emphases added.). It is the action of the body to open itself onto the world in a manner that depends crucially on an opacity at its heart imperceptible to it, while reciprocally the world must itself be open to such exploration. It is always within this intimate embrace that I find myself. Therefore who I am and how I am to be known – to others but significantly also to my self – is always entirely through the world in which I live.

That our multiple sensory modalities and motor capacity are constantly and concurrently at work and integrated into a comprehensive synaesthetic grasp of the perceived setting through the singleness of one's body means that the spatiality of

the situation is highly differentiated into 'embodied categories', *without the differentiatedness of this schematic structure dividing my experience of the field as a unity*. The differentiation of the phenomenal field can no doubt give rise conceptually to distinctions and from this point of view the claim of a highly differentiated yet indivisible unity may seem contradictory. But as experienced perceptually the phenomenal field as available to me through my embodiment is non-conceptual and therefore presents obstacles, problems, tasks, and curiosities but never contradictions. The 'break' in the world necessary for there to be a point of view at all, which lies in the opaque recess of my body, is a condition of the field's realization and is therefore not itself experienced. Just as I lose my subjectivity for the sake of the objects into which I am thrown, the body's opacity is the absence from perception necessary for the world to be experientially present to me as a unity. For example, that the visual array is bounded, in terms of the indistinct edges of peripheral vision 'around me', and 'in front' of me in always receding fashion by a horizon, places me as perceiver at one and the same time in the conceptually contradictory position of being at the center and at the periphery simultaneously. There is both the asymmetry of my being the spectator always looking onto the visual array from its boundary of a felt but unseen dimensionless volume 'behind' me, and the symmetry of my being at the privileged center of the world simply by turning around. If I am backed against a massive cliff, I do not conceive the world as coming to an end behind me, but perceive what is neither conceivable nor inconceivable, that the world goes on but my passage is blocked. Something that is hidden or lost from view does not vanish; it is hidden or lost from view. Merleau-

Ponty is at pains to draw our (reflective) attention to the partiality, occlusions, gaps, fissures, and lacunas, within our perception, which despite the connotations to the contrary these terms imply conceptually, do not fragment the unity of our perceptual experience of the world, which ranges over and incorporates all these *without a break*.

The most straightforward example of highly differentiated yet undivided unity is perhaps the visual array itself. If one pictures a typical landscape, whether urban or rural, filled with things standing and things in motion, it is an extraordinarily complex scenario, with its figures, shapes, lines, relations, depths, distances, occlusions, hollows, surfaces, edges, solidities, spaces, shadows, contrasts, and juxtapositions (see, e.g., J. J. Gibson, 1979, for an "ecological" exploration of what the visual array "affords"). Conceptually it is complex, perhaps incalculably so if thought in terms of conceiving, representing, and calculating the many allocentric distances and relations; but perceptually I take it all in with a single glance (viewed egocentrically the ratios between all the allocentric distances remain invariant). The river here, the hedge alongside me, those buildings there, do not break the array into unconnected parts or divide the world up into irreconcilable dimensions. They only affect the paths I might take, alter my plans, constrain my routes, enable or disable my motion.[9]

The unity of the field as presence

The description of perception as a highly differentiated yet undivided unity in experience of my subjectivity-in-the-world has been primarily *spatial*, whereas

temporality has been implicit all along within the very dynamics of the body as always in action – moving, inspecting, exploring the environment – mostly as a prospective, anticipatory aspect. This anticipatory element is clearly evident in the notion "I can". The setting I perceive as structured by the possibilities of my reach always involves embodied categories of duration for the performance of action and motion. For example, 'time to reach' something depends not on a chronological measure or comparison to clock time but on my kinaesthetic sense relative to the configuration of the terrain. Making explicit the temporal aspect always at work within perception is also an indispensable reflective step in bringing to the fore the transformation of the perceived figure into an object. Time also proves decisive for understanding the significance of that opacity from which our perspective issues.

A particular view at any particular moment, as an assortment of figures within a horizon, is present spatially to perception in terms of *profiles*, of things against backgrounds, each of which I perceive individually as a whole but not because I see all its sides at once (Merleau-Ponty's usual example is the cube, of which I can see three sides at most). That I grasp the profile in the instant in a multi-modal 'synthesis', a *syn-aes-thesis*, of the senses (I can see it, touch it, taste it, etc.) and that this synaesthetic grasp is indivisibly and non-conceptually tied into the anticipatory temporal possibilities embodied in my capacity for movement – I can back up, lean forward, circle around, peer under, things and spaces – gives the spatial profile the solidity, three-dimensionality, and duration of a fully self-sufficient thing. I can walk around it, move it, leave it and return to it, and so on; it

is 'detachable' in a practical way from its context as if it was a self-existent thing-in-itself precisely because it is unceasingly supported in perceptual experience, that is, within the context of my embodied activity in the world. In addition to this spatial solidity, the experience of the thing further requires a temporal synthesis of successive profiles, which is not to be understood as a fixation (as if 'synthesis' depends on my conscious effort) but as an embodied continuity of time that endures despite apparent breaks and gaps in the contact between the thing and myself. "Objective time" has to be understood as based upon this 'enduring', the constant overlapping of past and future (p. 420), while at the center of the structured setting of the phenomenal field the opaque recess of the body imperceptibly "effects" "a *passage"* (p. 421) between moments and in this way synthesizes the transition and integrates the succession of profiles into one thing. In summarizing this work, Merleau-Ponty (1964a) writes that "it is perceptual experience which gives us the passage from one moment to the next and thus realizes the unity of time" (p. 13). Just as space is broken up and divided into things, occlusions, depths, and fissures, that do not break up or divide my perceptual experience due to the effective action of the body, so time is broken up into moments, durations, forgetfulness, passings away, disappearances, and so on without being experienced as fragments but as a temporal whole.

In the short-term of action, of merely moving and looking through a terrain, I effect a grasp of the phenomenal field that can be appropriately characterized as a *synaesthetic* unity. The long-term integration of past moments and the present

oriented toward a future as non-conceptually and effortlessly effected through the mysterious integrity of my body involves some integral capacity to sustain the unity of experience that is irreducible to synaesthetic unity. This *integral* unity of experience, the unity of experience over time, as non-conceptual, cannot be a matter of an identity by means of any content in the sense of a constancy or continuity of representation but is rather a temporalizing of kinaesthetic sense, embodied in a "style" or "manner". Recalling that I as a subject am not opposed to the world, but indivisibly part of it, this notion of style is not to be interpreted exclusively subjectively in terms of "my style". Rather, it is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's entire perception thesis, as he makes clear in a summary statement of the thesis: "the perceived world, in its turn, is not a pure object of thought without fissures or lacunae; it is, rather, like a universal style shared in by all perceptual beings" (1964a, p. 6).[10]

Merleau-Ponty does not distinguish the spatial from the temporal. I do for heuristic reasons that I return to in Chapter Five. But this distinction should not overshadow the central aim of Merleau-Ponty's exposition of the phenomenal field: to demonstrate the spatio-temporal solidarity of perceptual experience in a non-conceptual unity of the perceiver-in-the-world that asserts itself as an incomparable and indubitable *presence*. Integral to comprehending the import of this claim is appreciating the monumental, incontrovertible weight of the assertive power of this presence throughout all experience and throughout the thought and reflection that emerges from and extends experience. Only in extra-ordinarily disembodied

experience when the body breaks down due to illness, trauma or pathology (such as the numerous clinical cases and experimental phenomena provided by Binswanger, Gelb, Goldstein, Stein, and others that Merleau-Ponty examines throughout the *Phenomenology of perception*), would this assertion of a unity of presence not carry an overpowering force.[11] Merleau-Ponty's numerous descriptions of perception, his dialectical correction of the opposing positions of intellectualism and empiricism that stem from their disembodied conception of experience, and his countless examples to demonstrate this point are all aspects of one co-ordinated appeal to experience in order to disclose the thick palpable sense constantly implicit of the seemingly unbreakable bond between oneself and the world. In this chapter I have summarized, somewhat repetitively, this bodily work of effecting the presence of the world, in my own terms of a non-conceptual, differentiated yet undivided unity. This bond between body and world is so fundamental that it acts as the connective tissue between words and ideas that unceasingly supports them, operating as their hidden accomplice that fleshes them out with a feeling and assurance that has never seemed to need naming or thinking. For this reason Merleau-Ponty describes it as "perceptual faith", and claims that against it science will never amount to more than hearsay, while objectivity proves merely its rationalization (p. 344).

With the disclosure of presence as the most apt characterization of the non-conceptual unity of the perceiver-in-the-world effected through the body in perception all the elements necessary to reconstruct the genealogy of objectivity are in place, requiring only their manner of coherence be brought out. What we take on

an unquestionable faith is that the thing we encounter, which we grasp as a profile in a moment or series of moments, always partially or obscurely, sometimes half-hidden, now out of sight, or else a continent away and unseen for a decade, and so on, continues to endure as an objectively existing thing-in-itself whose existence, nature, and self-sufficiency is (and always has been and always will be) entirely independent of my own existence. Thus, that I as subject and the thing as object can be posited as self-contained unities independent of each other only has sense through some experience of unity prior to their distinction. I experience myself as subject as indistinctly situated together with objects in a single field and it is impossible to ever tear either myself or the object out of the field. Consequently, "the unity of either the subject or the object is not a real unity, but a presumptive unity on the horizon of experience" (p. 219). That the thing depends on its background of the field in which it is set, or that the field structure in turn depends on the body that inhabits it, or that this body itself has a beginning at birth and a passing away at death – none of this occurs to our perceptual faith. This blindness on the part of faith never troubles it, but sets profound problems for all thinking which tries to make this faith explicit.

> The tacit thesis of perception is that at every instant experience can be co-ordinated with that of the previous instant and that of the following, and my perspective with that of other consciousnesses – that all contradictions can be removed, that monadic and intersubjective experience is one unbroken text – that what is now indeterminate for me could become determinate for a more complete knowledge, which is as it were realized in advance in the thing, or rather which is the thing itself. (p. 54)

We take it on faith that perception gives us the object, a giving that always obtains against the background of a coherent undivided unity of presence of the perceiver-

in-the-world; that this sensible moment here-and-now wherein I experience some object can be "co-ordinated" to all other places and times stretching to infinity and eternity. This is never proven nor tested, which is significant not for supporting the principled argument that the thesis cannot be proven or tested (although this is true), nor for its being therefore metaphysical (which is also true), but that in this "thesis" being realized through non-conceptual embodied experience it does not need or recognize proofs or tests.[12] If one's consciousness as being-in-the-world is effectively realized through the body as the phenomenal field, 'against which' background, or 'within which' field, all proofs or tests, all making determinate, or speaking most generally, *all making of consciousness explicit*, take place, then complete determination or full explicitation is unrealizeable (p. 61). The body I live, always necessarily implicitly, is the horizon of my thought, and the experiential limit to what my explicit consciousness can bear on, that is, to what I can meaningfully know. In the first-person, the difference between the explicit and the implicit is precisely the "I" of all first-person description who feels, rightly or wrongly, his or her identity to be coextensive with what he *explicitly* knows and does.

The genealogy of objectivity

Objectivity emerges as a presumed rigorous ideal for knowledge through drawing on its perceptual faith that the object is given to the perceiver as it is. This belief in the existence of the object independent of the perceiving subject is tacitly developed and persists despite the object's only ever appearing to the subject in perceptual experience. Essential to this belief is the curious aspect of perception as embodied

that effaces its own contribution to the experience in order to give the full appearance of presence, which means both that the object depends crucially and nontrivially on an implicit background unity of the perceiver-in-the-world in order to appear at all and that the background unity as non-conceptually embodied simultaneously renders itself trivial and insignificant such that it is taken for granted in perception and overlooked upon initial reflection.

To make the perceived thing into an object of knowledge according to rigorous standards of objectivity, all the implicit experiences of the thing have to be made explicit in a fully determinate and unequivocal account. As noted above, this ideal of full explicitation runs against the horizonal limit imposed by the structure of experience, that is that all making explicit takes place against a greater implicit background bounded by a horizon and therefore the more one makes explicit the further back the horizon is pushed. The objectivist can counter this regressive possibility and circumvent its negation of the ideal of a fully explicit knowledge through escaping experience, either as the empiricist does through an appeal to an intersubjective agreement on observation or as the transcendentalist does through an appeal to an *a priori* necessity. These responses would acknowledge the horizonal surround to their explicit knowledge of the object but would deny it a significant role and allow them to make the object fully and exhaustively explicit from their intersubjective or *a priori* position.

Merleau-Ponty blocks these possibilities. In both cases in order to advance their respective intersubjective or *a priori* hypotheses they are already relying on the idea of an object detached from its context as an independently subsisting thing. This idea derives from their perceptual faith which depends on the manner in which experience is structured through the body into the phenomenal field. The incomplete reflection of the objectivist position simply stops at the perceptual faith instead of reflecting further. Merleau-Ponty's further reflection finds, beyond the initial suggestion based on perceptual faith that the perceived thing exists independently in itself, the existential recognition that the very object-horizon structure as an apparent unity of full presence rests upon an imperceptible, unobjectifiable opacity that serves as the break necessary for realizing a perspective. The background unity of the perceiver-in-the-world that suggests to an incomplete reflection that this unity is dispensable for the sake of a fully explicit object proves upon a deeper reflection to provide precisely the reason why it would be considered dispensable. Deeper reflection also manifests how it is that both object and its background unity of the perceiver-in-the-world depend on an opacity that as incapable of being made explicit precludes the possibility of any full explicitation or completely determinate knowledge. Instead of looking outside ourselves to fully circumscribe and master an objective world external to us, we turn inside our own selves to uncover a mystery at the very heart of our existence that we cannot dominate or overcome. This acknowledgment of an inner weakness or "passivity" (p. 61) signifies a whole different orientation in philosophy; "our being" can*not* be "brought down to our knowledge" (p. 62).

A powerful implication that emerges from Merleau-Ponty's conception is the positing of a post-objectivist ideal for knowledge (i.e., a post-empiricist and post-transcendentalist existential ideal) through resituating focus onto the crucially creative activity of 'making explicit' as always taking place within the context of an implicit faith in an unquestionable presence. The way to conceive this context is through its most general structure, that of its opening onto a horizonal limit on the one hand, and of its opaque center which introduces the break necessary for perspective and in so doing absents itself for the sake of realizing an undivided, unbroken field of presence on the other. There is no bypassing experience in order to ascertain the objective truth of the thing-in-itself, as the premise for the radical division of the subject from the world misconstrues the significance of perceptual faith and proves to rely on the impossibility of making explicit to consciousness all that is implicitly in consciousness. Rather experience must be turned upon the division within itself to disclose the truth of the premises it already implicitly lives but does not explicitly know.

The object always necessarily presupposes a personal subject who can perceive it and know it. These are inseparably conjoined against a background unity of presence of the perceiver-in-the-world which is an experience of the world in which the object and subject are indistinct. These three 'terms' – object, personal subject, background unity of presence – altogether compose the "phenomenal field" which is the anonymous work of the implicit subjectivity of the impersonal human body.

The object, the background of the world that situates it, and *my own self*, are all supported upon and emerge from the pre-personal body that lives me. While "I" emerge through making myself explicit, the object and the ideal of objectivity it implies emerge from the manner in which I take the world on perceptual faith.

Upon an initial reflection, this experience of the object upon being made explicit is understood to depend on the actuality of the thing in the world (the pond in the distance that disappears as I approach, was actually a heat mirage and not actual water) and the possibilities structured through my embodiment that realize the thing-in-the-world into its perception (as I could just as likely have merely glanced at the distant 'pond' and left without resolving the ambiguity of whether it was actually water or actually an illusion). A further or second reflection, that continues to reflect on the pre-reflective experience of the ambiguous perception of the mirage/water, as well as reflect on the transformations wrought on such experience by the initial reflection that had transformed the ambiguity of the mirage or water possibilities into an actuality (it *was actually* a mirage), clarifies and corrects this understanding. For to apply to the pre-reflective experience the conceptual distinction between possibility and actuality transforms the perceptually unquestioned reality of the situation into its explicit truth and falsely imputes a doubt to my practical grasp where there was only an unproblematic ambiguity. The categories of necessity, validity, verification, universality, and so on that accompany reflection are invoked to ascertain 'the truth of the situation'. But non-conceptually pre-reflective experience *always proves true* in its ambiguously

admitting of contrary possibilities. Ambiguity is unproblematic in virtue of my implicitly prospective body – *I can* resolve the possibilities of the situation and verify what is true (for now), and this confirms there is no doubt: my perceptual faith remains unshaken.

For Merleau-Ponty, there is no reality behind the appearance, but we perceive reality just as it appears, and this appearance is non-conceptually true, which is to say it is *realized in ambiguity* and not a conceptual question of actuality versus possibility. When reflection is brought conceptually and explicitly to bear on this pre-reflective, non-conceptual, non-thetic experience that is implicitly lived, a selective refinement of that experience according to criteria of universality, necessity, and conditions of possibility, is set into motion. In selectively refining experience, the ambiguous truth taken pre-reflectively on faith and unquestioned as real in its facticity is transformed into the clarified truth of reflection as a way of configuring an already-lived, already-meaningful world that carries the privilege of being explicitly knowable. It is not that the question of the explicit truth of the situation is invalid, but that it has to be recognized as always only emerging when someone asks it as a question, and that who this person is, that he or she speaks from the particularity of his or her perspective and history, and that the question and its answers have been posed at a particular time and place, are all part of the truth, too. Put differently, Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of perception demonstrate again and again that implicitly, non-conceptually, in pre-reflective experience, reality and truth are undifferentiated. Conceptual thought, reflection, and explicitation, as

brought to bear on that pre-reflective experience, effect the differentiation of experience into implicit versus explicit, non-conceptual versus conceptual, pre-reflective versus reflective, and therefore differentiate experience into its reality versus its truth. An incomplete reflective effort does not see the difference it has made. A first reflection, although more self-aware than the naïve consciousness that takes the objects perception gives it on a faith in presence, reiterates this faith at the level of explicit consciousness in assuming it makes what was implicit in pre-reflective experience present to thought 'just as it was' and entirely through its own effort. The mind repeats the body's perceptual faith: it thinks that reflecting (as with perceiving) made no difference to the pre-reflective (perceived) thing.

Conclusion: The existential unity of the subject-in-the-world

The contribution of the body to experience as evident throughout all perception is its realizing of presence. In summary statements of his work, Merleau-Ponty (1964a) writes, "To perceive is to render oneself present to something through the body" (p. 42), and that "the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us" (p. 25). In the notion of presence as that which founds objectivism, Merleau-Ponty claims to have found a "significance deeper" than that of a transcendental constituting consciousness as well as a solution to the nature/consciousness, in-itself/for-itself dualism with which his first two works were occupied (p. 430). At an existential, lived level of perception Merleau-Ponty finds an effecting of "presence" that is the manner in which subjectivity-in-the-world, the experience I reflect upon, is realized. At this existential level there is a modality of consciousness at work in an "operative

intentionality" that realizes through the body the world as a phenomenal "field of presence in the widest sense" (p. 415) "differentiated" into "instants" (p. 419) which is not to be confused with an "intentionality of act" of a "thetic consciousness" that intellectually synthesizes moments into an "ideal unity" (p. 418). In retrospect, he summarizes this discovery of the existential level in terms of signifying "a new type of relation between the mind and truth":

> Before our undivided existence the world is true; it exists. The unity, the articulation of both are intermingled. We experience in it a truth which shows through and envelops us rather than being held and circumscribed by our mind. (1964a, p. 6)

The significance of this new type of relation is far-reaching in that it introduces new criteria for truth by which to evaluate our knowledge and theories. Accepting these criteria – best characterized as existential – as compelling would amount to a decisive alteration in the self-understanding and aims, and hence practices, of philosophy and the human sciences. That these existential criteria are introduced through, and that their acceptance depends upon, the manner in which they are disclosed in appealing to experience attests to their being crucially significant for psychology and the human sciences. To appreciate these considerations a summary and final exposition of Merleau-Ponty's description of the phenomenal field that has culminated in presence is in order.

Over against objectivism, which in dividing the subject from the world posited as objective proves unable to reconcile the two without proliferating antinomies, Merleau-Ponty attempted to "restore the world of perception", first through utilization of a Gestalt notion of structure, followed by a description of the

phenomenal field which disclosed a fundamental level of existence wherein perceptual experience of the world is non-conceptually realized through the body as a differentiated unity of "presence". (To anticipate how this movement of thought further develops, presence in turn is transformed into "flesh", a term he coins as "there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it" (1964/1968, p. 139).) In undertaking his attempt to restore the world of perception Merleau-Ponty aims to reaffirm our basic affective life-attitude, of faith, certitude and wonder in the world contra its disenchantment by doubt, skepticism, and criticism. He hopes to disclose and assert the contribution of perception as the embodied aspect inherent in all experience contra intellectual philosophies that accord primacy to consciousness. And he displaces the subject-object distinction that pits subject against the world to a more fundamental division within the subject. The subject finds him or herself divided between life and knowledge, which has become more precisely described as the difference between the implicit and the explicit. Each of these aims already expresses a shift in evaluative criteria towards the existential pole wherein our faith, life, certitude, and wonder are implicitly lived prior to any knowing. At the same time, Merleau-Ponty hopes to accomplish these aims such that he also accounts for the emergence of objectivism from its origins in experience.

The point was established above that the ideal of objectivity requires objects that only obtain against a background of unity of the perceiving subject-in-the-world. All conceptual thinking assumes such a unity as it is necessary to guarantee the truth of thought. Any rigorous thinking, such as philosophy or science exemplify,

aims to demonstrate this unity of the subject-in-the-world which is an unshakable presence to experience and which therefore provides a coherence of linkages, a continuity of identity, a coherence of sensibility, and so on, that all thinking assumes. But rather than merely assume this unity – to explicate its linkages, leave no gaps or holes, clarify its concepts and their relations *without a break* – rigorous critical thinking has tried to make the nature of this unity explicit in various ways throughout its history (e.g., Lovejoy, 1936/1964). Since the Enlightenment, objectivity has been invoked as the most rigorous criterion for conceptual thinking and subsequent attempts to posit unity had to be made in objective terms or be dismissed as dogmatic. But as discussed in the first chapter the very premise of objectivity in disengaging the subject from Nature incited a deeper crisis for philosophy that raised the problem of unity to an unprecedented pitch – in addition to tying all knowledge together into one account, and clarifying the manner in which knowledge is always already tied to life, it also became necessary to tie the subject back to Nature. Since all attempts to establish unity are invariably metaphysical, this does not condemn them (except by the positivist, whose own grounds are less tenable and more contemptible) so much as awaken the bugbear of ultimate proofs, justifications, principles, grounds, and all the difficulties of philosophy. In the context of philosophy's losing out to the idealization of the field and its naturalistic premises, a loss which served to entrench the problem of unity deeper, these difficulties would seem to have been exacerbated. The need for a compelling argument for unity seems indisputable, a *sine qua non* for any knowledge. The sort of argument required has been understood exclusively as a

logical necessity and a demand of reason, and since the nineteenth century (particularly due to Kant's influence), as above all the duty of epistemology.[13] I have interpreted Merleau-Ponty's work through this theme of unity, an interpretation that offers a reading of the history of philosophy on his terms that, regardless of the rightness of his view, is insightful for situating him. It also affords a systematic interpretive guideline to the oeuvre of a prolific thinker who was explicitly anti-systematic and often bewildering, without thereby reducing the richness of his philosophy which, it was once remarked, "results in a novel" and would be "better expressed in literature and in painting" (cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, p. 30).

For Merleau-Ponty, the solution to the problem of unity depends crucially upon conceptual thought's capacity to recognize, based on an adequate reflective effort, the distinctive limits and contributions of the embodied aspect inherent in all experience. This aspect provides the abstractions of conceptual thought with the concretely-felt sense of its meanings through the non-conceptual action of 'taking up a position', 'installing oneself in a point of view', or 'realizing the world from a perspective', an action that in its very operation effaces itself for the sake of the object – in this case, for the sake of the concept as the object of thought. The body acts as the continuous support to thought – quite literally, it *realizes* thought – but the very manner in which it does so (which I have been designating 'non-conceptual') effaces its supporting role with the result that thought appears transparent, that is present, to itself. The critical deliberations that are crucial for

clarifying conceptual thought proceed on this basis, uncritically taking the non-conceptual for granted and overlooking its contribution, with the consequence that thought faces a conundrum which I take as the key to the history of philosophy on Merleau-Ponty's terms. The conundrum is in thought's staking knowledge claims that prove impossible to redeem because even when it does think these claims through to their origins, it does not *think them through* – by which phrase what is intended, is to make fully present to thought without a break – as it cannot *think* these origins, for at the very heart of our embodiment is an opacity to reflection.

This is an insoluble problem for the naïve consciousness that undergirds empiricism and classical scientific realism, which tries to clarify its concepts through more and more particulate empirical *observation* as if Nature is 'given' to consciousness such that it could correct Reason (rather than this assumption being precisely the problem). The reasoning is that the unity of thought that guarantees truth could be made fully explicit through a cumulative ideal that proposes a progressive addition of knowledge whose 'summing up' of the parts would equal the whole. The more profound response to the conundrum is that of the philosophy of consciousness, which initiates reflection on itself so as to clarify its concepts immanently. Descartes' account of the *cogito* first breaks this ground, with Kant's Copernican hypothesis decisively situating the problem within human subjectivity, understood transcendentally in terms of the self-legislating capacities of Reason. The question becomes how to think Reason through from within, in light of Nature's being *constituted* in consciousness. The unity of thought that guarantees truth and

overcomes the apparent divisions within knowledge and threaten knowledge with fragmentation, inconsistency and incoherence, becomes a unity that has to be made fully explicit through a systematically unfolded transcendental reflection that supports a synoptic ideal. But here the philosophy of consciousness also founders, for its ascription of absolute constitutive power to consciousness proceeds from what appears to thought, or put differently, from what manifests in the experience we call 'thinking'. Conscious thought is the presence of thought to itself, and reflection continually confirms this through effecting the return of the thinker to the presence of the thought. The point of Merleau-Ponty's thesis of the primacy of perception is that this appearance of presence is the non-conceptual work of the body that gives this appearance based on an unobjectifiable opacity at its basis which radically undermines and transforms the understanding of thought, objectivity and knowledge as their fundamental presupposition of an ideal of full explicitation is undercut. The claim that the realization of presence is due to our embodiment, and not our consciousness, has a significance which serves to redefine that consciousness and its aims and turns the concern with objective knowledge into reflection upon oneself.

For Merleau-Ponty, to carry reflection all the way through involves a reflection-on-reflection that corrects the extravagance of thought's knowledge claims by making explicit the principled limits that are set on consciousness by the implicit limits set by embodiment as evident in perceptual experience. Despite their differences, empiricism and transcendentalism share a common presumption: they try *to think*

the unity of the world, escaping the partiality of perspective of the subject – who as a subject-in-the-world *already embodies that unity* – based on an appeal to an ideal of a total explicitation, rather than acknowledging that their already living the world from a perspective has a significance that leads to a very different ideal of truth. For empiricism, the subject is an observer opposed to the world and consciousness therefore a passive "mirror of nature" (Rorty, 1979) which receives sense-data and sense-impressions that must be associated into some mechanistic unity. For transcendentalism, human subjectivity is an active consciousness constituting the world and itself which is capable of an absolute reflection so as to attain identity, coincidence, transparency, and self-presence. Both rely upon the existential fact that they already find themselves in a world realized through a body that is not thought and that does not constitute itself, but which actively asserts itself and through this action effects a field of presence founded upon a passivity and opaqueness at its center that blocks any absolute constitutive power of consciousness. The aspiration to full explicitness or to the totality of a system, to a knowledge rendered completely determinate through effecting thought's closure, is doomed to fail because it does not recognize its reliance on the body. In formalizing this failure this aspiration to full explicitation effectively betrays life as rooted in the body by closing off, for the sake of a partial truth, the deeper truth that life is essentially an openness to the world. Recognition of this existential aspect of life, which embodies the contradiction that the very partiality of our perspective is what realizes the fully present unity of our experience, introduces the nonrational conditions of our

subjectivity as nontrivial and sets a new demand on reason that redefines transcendental philosophy's self-understanding and criteria.

> A philosophy becomes transcendental, or radical, not by taking its place in absolute consciousness without mentioning the ways by which this is reached, but by considering itself as a problem; not by postulating a knowledge rendered totally explicit, but by recognizing *as the fundamental philosophic problem this presumption on reason's part.* (p. 63. Emphasis added.)

The anonymous body that realizes the particular perspective necessary for the perception, the phenomenal field, and the experience of the world as an undivided presence which bring about this shift, is neither a consciousness purely mirroring an external Nature nor a pure consciousness reflectively constituting an absolute Reason, but is that impersonal human subjectivity on which we all live, from which you and I emerge as persons, and where prior to Nature or Reason we struggle to realize our desire, truth, freedom, and love. In a word, it is history; and through a mystery at its heart that cannot be overcome we find ourselves bound to one another, and precisely on the basis of this unreasonable, unattainable impossible the condition is set for realizing our reason and gauging the value of our efforts such that 'human being' achieves a definition and becomes a meaning.

Chapter 5. Clarifying Merleau-Ponty: The problem of language

The primacy of perception: new orientation or traditional foundationalism?

Merleau-Ponty's phrase "primacy of perception" suggests that he is not, as I have been reading him, advancing a new orientation for thinking so much as elaborating, or arguably even confusing, the traditional foundationalist approach to knowledge. Merleau-Ponty makes claims on numerous occasions (particularly on auspicious ones such as his address to the *Société française de philosophie* in 1946 upon the publication of *Phenomenology of Perception*), that reinforce this connotation: perception is "an original modality of consciousness", while "the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence".

> The certainty of ideas is not the foundation of the certainty of perception but is, rather, based on it – in that it is perceptual experience which gives us the passage from one moment to the next and thus realizes the unity of time. In this sense all consciousness is perceptual, even the consciousness of ourselves. (1964a, p. 13)

These claims are certainly strong, and could be interpreted to suggest, taking exclusively the outline of perceptual experience in the previous chapter and ignoring my gloss, that Merleau-Ponty is advocating some sort of elaborate empiricism. Instead of the classical notion of observation, he substitutes phenomenological description, while the phenomenal field replaces sense data or sense impressions as basic. Lending greater plausibility to this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty often reverts to a seemingly pre-Kantian appeal to facts and reality as if Kant's transcendental turn had not definitively established the necessity of something akin to *a priori* principled argument, and on two occasions he uses the

surprising phrase "phenomenological positivism" (1945/1962, p. xvii; 1964a, p. 50) in describing Husserl's aim and his own work as, ostensibly, its extension.[1]

I argue that this interpretation misreads Merleau-Ponty, but in a revealing way insofar as it stems from a problematic knot within his thinking that is only gradually unraveled over his lifetime.[2] To take Merleau-Ponty's early works exclusively on their own terms (as I perhaps appeared to do in the previous chapter) would present the reader with the knot as unresolved and capable of being unraveled in alternative and contradictory ways. Reading his early work in light of his entire oeuvre, however, interprets earlier issues and problems through the lens of the resolutions and revisions that he undertakes in his later works. This manner of reading Merleau-Ponty against himself unravels the problematic knot in his thinking in a way that can correct him while still claiming to be a faithful exposition. In the course of undertaking this reading, Merleau-Ponty's apparently foundationalist claims shift dramatically.

This is the interpretive strategy I have been following. One consequence is that the exposition of the field in the previous chapter was not merely simplified, but was presented with the centrally problematic knot removed for the sake of a consistency and coherence not found in Merleau-Ponty's texts. In brief, the strands of embodiment and language implicit within his early conception of perception prove to be thoroughly entangled, jeopardizing his entire thesis. The confusion of the roles embodiment and language play in realizing perceptual experience becomes most

evident in his examination of thought and of time. The role of language occupies the foreground in the tellingly-titled *Signs* (1960/1964c) and comes to a conclusion of sorts in the incomplete *The visible and the invisible* (1964/1968).[3] His final work replays in miniature the transition from an overemphasis on embodied perception to a recognition of the role of language as deserving equally fundamental importance, which in a sense summarizes a project of clarification the duration of Merleau-Ponty's life. Thus his final work begins apparently reiterating his primacy of perception thesis in emphasizing the reliance of the "invisible" "universe of thought" upon the "visible" "canonical structures of the sensible world" (1964/1968, p. 12), but in conclusion it is clear that these "canonical structures" are not exclusively due to our nonverbal, sensibly-embodied contribution to experience. Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) asserts (citing Lacan approvingly) that "vision itself" and "thought itself, are, as has been said, 'structured as a language'" (p. 126). If "vision itself", that paradigmatic exemplar of perceptual experience for Merleau-Ponty, is argued to be "structured as a language", then language has superceded 'perception' – tellingly, a term which rarely occurs in this work – in importance.[4] This surprising superceding of perception by language comes at the end of a long-term project of transition and clarification instigated by a confusion evident in his early work. This chapter aims to make the confusion clear through reading Merleau-Ponty against himself, so as to resolve the problems it creates that involve, first, the relation between body and language within perception, and second, misinterpreting his work as foundationalist or empiricist.

To belabor the metaphor of the knot one last time, Merleau-Ponty ties it in two stages over the course of the two decisive chapters (The *cogito* and Temporality) of the *Phenomenology of perception* (Part 3, Chs. 1 & 2). This two-stage development, which is a compounding of a single confusion over the role of language, is also an intriguing complex of ironies: for after the most sustained and masterful analysis of the role of the body ever undertaken in Western philosophy, Merleau-Ponty lapses into a particularly French tradition of failing to overcome the legacy of its master, Descartes, upon confronting the *cogito*. Merleau-Ponty first propounds an intellectualist and decidedly anti-existential notion of the body as a "tacit *cogito*", and then builds on this problematic notion the unexamined anti-phenomenological assumption of time's flowing as a naturalistic given. This move lends support to interpreting Merleau-Ponty's project along traditional foundationalist lines, a reading I wish to unsettle. To best understand these problems and ironies, I will continue to read Merleau-Ponty through the theme of unity, as undertaken in the previous chapter, with emphasis on its three key aspects: one, unity as effected through the body is that of an appearance of full presence; two, the body understood as an ambiguous mixture of personal and impersonal subjectivity; and three, that the imperceptible condition of the body's effecting a unity of presence is an opacity which introduces the break in the world necessary for the particularity of a perspective.

Opacity, passivity, and the contradictions of partiality

Addressing the Cartesian *cogito* is a decisive moment in Merleau-Ponty's description of perception where his construal of embodiment is put to the test and

where the limits set by opacity play a crucial role in opposing Descartes' overprivileging of thought. The decisiveness this moment holds for Merleau-Ponty is not solely because he is French, but due to his project being to reverse the prioritizing of thought and explicit knowledge over the body, experience, and life that Descartes' manner of construing the mind-body relation promotes.[5] Retrieving and demonstrating the nontrivial contribution of human embodiment to experience, which I have been designating by the term 'non-conceptual' to underscore Merleau-Ponty's oppositional intent vis-à-vis the privileging of the conceptual, restores the world of perception by reminding us of our deeper perceptual faith that science, philosophy and all thought presuppose. In addition, retrieval of the contribution of embodiment discloses an *experiential limit* that prevents full explicitation of our implicit consciousness and precludes the possibility of totally determinate knowledge. The other side of this limit is an opacity to reflection and thought that, in one of Merleau-Ponty's favored expressions, lies on the "hither side" of the body and establishes the vantage point for perceiving the world as the condition for realizing a particular perspective such that perception proves to be structured as a phenomenal field.

Merleau-Ponty stresses that this opacity of the body as the condition for perceiving sets a limit to consciousness, above all, of time: the irrecuperable past, an unrecoverable passage of time. "Consciousness discovers in itself, along with the sensory fields and with the world as the field of all fields, the opacity of a primary past" (p. 351). The past is taken up by the body in an incorporative activity that

does not *record* the past as if the body stood outside time, but *retains* the past as the time it has lived through. The past as a "sediment" or "acquisition" is therefore recoverable and can be made available to reflection (and becomes, through reflection, history). But even more "primary" than this past that is sedimented in the body is the passing of time that the body effects existentially in virtue of being and enduring, a time that is not hidden or effaced but nevertheless lost to perception and irrecuperable to reflection (hence, opaque). This is time as "passage, which objective thought always presupposes yet never manages to fasten on to" (p. 415). Like our birth or our death as the outstanding examples of this unrecoverable time, the ongoing passage of time within the imperceptible recess of the body throughout succeeding moments provides the *continuity* supporting both my personal subjectivity and the impersonal anonymous subjectivity of my body in general, such that my entire life has a unity.

> The event of my birth has not passed completely away… My first perception, along with the horizons which surrounded it, is an ever-present event, an unforgettable tradition; even as a thinking subject, I still am that first perception, the continuation of that same life inaugurated by it. (p. 407)

The enduring world and the body in its coming to be as a continuous hold on the world form a singular unity in perceptual experience unbroken in time. But just as perception always presupposes a limit that proves opaque to it, so too the continuity that is the body's effecting of the passing of time, from birth until death, is opaque.

The body's ambiguous subjectivity that I live from is offset against this opaque, inaccessible recess as against an Otherness that remains ultimately a mystery. Neither through perception nor in reflection can I penetrate this mystery and

therefore reason cannot gain any purchase into this opacity either. I do not know my birth or my death or what it is that sustains me throughout my life: my whole existence is rooted in contingency. There is no guarantee of the temporal continuity necessary to uphold my body, the unity of the world, the identity of the "I". An accident could undo any of these or bring about my end. Reason is powerless against this existential factiticity I live, in the face of the *radical contingency* of my body and my situation. But reason, and thinking and reflection too, depend on the contingency of the body as it is the support of the temporal continuity they each presuppose. The dependency of thought upon the body revisits the notion of the priority of life over knowledge and deepens the significance of this asymmetry in a way that is important to spell out.

In the exposition of the phenomenal field in the previous chapter, the opacity as the condition for realizing perspective and a bodily limit to perception disabled the ideal of full explicitation on which objectivity was dependent. In setting a limit to what could be made explicitly conscious and by implication what could be determinately known opacity held a negative, restrictive significance. Similarly, from the point of view of explicit, conceptual knowledge the unity of experience effected through the body in the world's appearing as fully present is a kind of deception, since the opacity of the body on which that experiential unity relies at the same time denies the possibility of a fully explicit unity. However, in asserting the impossibility of thought's penetrating into this lived time in order to know, guarantee, or make this temporality explicit, the positive significance of the

freedom of thought and reason and reflection relative to their contingent dependence on the temporal continuity of the body also comes into view.

Before any demand for knowledge or a guarantee, before any thought, or before any of those operations that go into constituting the explicit truth, the continuity of my lived body conjoined to the unity of the world laid the basis from which "I" and all my questions, demands, and guarantees emerge. "The primary truth is indeed 'I think', but only provided that we understand thereby 'I belong to myself' while belonging to the world" (p. 407). This being the case, there is not any way to obtain a guarantee or knowledge or truth of this "belonging" to myself and to the world. All measures, all proofs, even the most rudimentary claims to identity, noncontradiction, or consistency dependent upon a minimal reflection or comparison presuppose a temporal continuity that cannot itself be drawn into their sphere of operations. "It is through temporality that there can be, without contradiction, *ipseity*, significance, and reason" (p. 426). But this limit enables thinking, reasoning, and reflecting in such a way that they are through the same action *set free* of any need or demand to render an account of that temporality. Knowledge's pretension to full explicitation meets an experiential limit in the opacity of the body that it cannot overcome but in that very same recognition of its limits discovers that the very opacity that limits knowledge is the contingent support of the temporal continuity knowledge needs and presupposes. As contingent there is no accounting for my body or its opacity, implying that knowledge and thought and reflection are free to pursue their aims on this bodily basis without the

anxiety of attempting to account for what they cannot. To demand a knowledge or guarantee or truth to this opaque temporality is based on an epistemological pretense that I can abandon my perceptual faith and privilege knowledge over life in a way that proves contradictory to the very knowledge that demands a guarantee. Described epistemologically the inaccessibility of temporal continuity amounts to its being a metaphysical or absolute presupposition; formally, it either founds the problem of an infinite regress or constitutes, in Kantian terms, a transcendental category. Logically, it is a conundrum. Existentially, it affirms our human condition in terms of a radical contingency that simultaneously realizes us in our situation and frees us to the possibilities of that situation wherein our actions define our lives against a common mystery that is our fate.

The exposition of the phenomenal field in the previous chapter established that the ambiguous subjectivity of the body, incorporating the historical acquisition in a "style" of the social-cultural body, defines human consciousness, both individually (I as personal subject) and generally (the pre-personal body that lives me). In light of the significance of the temporal continuity of the body, this characterization of ambiguous subjectivity can be expanded to include the sense of consciousness as a quintessentially human achievement of self-definition against a backdrop of an unsurpassable Mystery superordinate to all our efforts. Extending Merleau-Ponty's characterization of the body in this way suggests consciousness be designated in some way that ascribes some inalienable uniqueness to human being. In so doing existentialism can be understood as rejoining classically philosophical concerns,

such as for example Aristotle's venerable description of human being, using Reason in the broad sense, as the 'animal possessing *logos*' (cf. Taylor, 1985a, Ch. 9). If the opacity at the heart of our agency and consequently our relation to time is construed as natural the objectivist opposition of a Reason against Nature is reinstated. This dichotomy Merleau-Ponty aims to overcome, not least because perception is made "incomprehensible" on these terms of Nature versus Reason (1964a, p. 10). Ostensibly this is the reason he employs these very terms, however at the risk of confusing his project: "Because I am borne into personal existence by a time which I do not constitute, all my perceptions stand out against a background of nature" (p. 347).[6] Merleau-Ponty's invocation of nature is a first hint to the problem that becomes marked later in his exposition, and to which I return below. At this point I want to keep attention focused on the importance of a time which "bears" me, which "I do not constitute", against which I am situated.

The significance of my being borne against a background of an inaccessible temporality, of "being encompassed, being in a situation" is its characterization in terms of *passivity* (p. 427). In those retrospective summaries wherein Merleau-Ponty (1964a) provides the best insights into his earlier work (as was clear in the citations interspersed throughout the exposition of the previous chapter) he claims that this passivity defines "a new type of relation between the mind and truth", "a truth which shows through and envelops us rather than being held and circumscribed by our mind" (p. 6). That my relation to time is passive is key as the index of opacity, as it is this passivity that blocks the fully constituting activity of

consciousness. Merleau-Ponty argues that transcendental philosophy requires the latter, but can only do so if it "attaches no importance to this resistance offered by passivity, as if it were not necessary to become the transcendental subject in order to have the right to affirm it" (p. 61). Passivity as resistance and therefore the indicator of an insurmountable opacity is important for setting a limit to the constituting power of consciousness. This limiting function composes its significance on the conceptual level. But non-conceptually it is equally significant in that this limit is the necessary condition not for constituting an *explicit* consciousness of the world but for introducing the *partiality* necessary for realizing a perspective on the world implicitly through the body. Limiting the full constitutive power of consciousness precludes the possibility of a fully determinate knowledge. Whatever is explicitly posited is always situated over against, "enveloped" by, an indeterminate, implicit background. Acting, and making explicit as an act, is precisely to take up that passive situation implicitly lived. "Passivity" "is being in a situation which we are perpetually resuming and which is constitutive of us" (p. 427). In raising the nontrivial importance of this implicit background an alternate ideal for knowledge also comes into view which is a "new relation between the mind and truth".

What is peculiarly alternative about this ideal is its emphasis on passivity, deferring the criteria for knowledge away from an active constitution (whether intellectually through a transcendental consciousness, or instrumentally through a self-defining subject) to rather the *existential relation* of my self (as subject) to my situation.

Merleau-Ponty describes this nonrational relation invariably under some ascription of "openness", such as awe, wonder, love, or astonishment, or most generally, in the *modality of feeling*.

> I am a thought which recaptures itself as already possessing an ideal of truth (which it cannot at each moment wholly account for) and which is the horizon of its operations. This thought ...*feels* itself rather than *sees* itself, ...searches after clarity rather than possesses it, ...creates truth rather than finds it. (1964a, p. 22. Original emphases.)

The implicit background, of my body as actively lived in its perception of the world, is 'known' to me through my feeling capacity. One achievement of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological descriptions has been to "relearn" "to feel our body". Feeling is "that other knowledge" of the body we have "in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body", a knowing-through-feeling "underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body" (p. 206). Between a detached knowledge reliant on an objective thought which foregrounds explicit consciousness, and an opaque mystery inaccessible to thought and yet providing the very condition for life and knowledge, mediates the whole equivocal range of feeling that composes the implicit background we actively explicitate in speech and which in passivity reflexively intimates our limits.

Feeling can occupy a person wholly even as the suggestion just made is that feeling irrupts as assertion of limits through the passivity of the body one lives. This is a claim that, just as with the characterization of an undivided unity of presence issuing from a break that enables it, repeats the paradox of perspective: the ascription of unity requires the partiality of a limited viewpoint. Although this

partiality introduces all the paradoxes and problems (for conceptual thought) that trouble any thinking which overrates itself, Merleau-Ponty sees these paradoxes as the very stuff of experience, the nonrational 'substance' of our feeling life, and evidence for the constant presence of the mystery from which such paradoxes and problems emerge. Thinking needs to make sense of these paradoxes, not by belittling, doubting, or rationalizing them away, but through making them explicit in a way that includes a recognition of the body's non-conceptual presence in that experience.

> Whether we are concerned with my body, the natural world, the past, birth or death, the question is always how I can be open to phenomena which transcend me, and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that I take them up and live them; how the presence to myself which establishes my own limits and conditions every alien presence is at the same time depresentation and throws me outside myself. (p. 363)

Introducing the partiality of a perspective, the inherent limit of a particular vantage point that enables a perceptual consciousness that can roam through the whole world before it, immediately raises what Merleau-Ponty calls elsewhere "the contradiction of immanence and transcendence" (1964a, p. 13), in that both limitation and freedom, restriction and openness, appear to be at work concurrently. But following the exposition of the phenomenal field of the previous chapter, a central aim of Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception thesis was to demonstrate how conceptual thought relies on an impossible ideal of full explicitation. Deprived of this ideal, thinking is forced to turn its critical reflections onto this ideal in order to question it as a presumption, and in turn onto the experience which gives rise to this presumption. According to Merleau-Ponty the return to experience entails an acknowledgment of the body whose non-conceptual action is to effect a unity that

proves to depend on its partiality of perspective. The contingency of being a particular body means that it is always somewhere, while in its freedom to act and move also means that it can assume a position virtually anywhere. Based on these types of conjunctions of oppositions – partiality means unity, somewhere means anywhere – Merleau-Ponty claims that these sorts of contradictions disappear as soon as they are understood "as the very condition for consciousness" (1964a, p. 19). Invoking the distinction between existential or non-conceptual and the formal or intellectual, he argues that within the ambit of the former, contradictions are "justified" or "fertile" whereas within the latter they prove "sterile" or "inert" (1964a, p. 19; 1948/1964b, p. 96n14). Insofar as every domain of experience is always necessarily embodied the paradox of perspective and all the contradictions for conceptual thought it raises are repeated again in each domain of experience. To a tradition of thinking such as the Cartesian tradition with its emphasis on clarity and distinctness, to forward a position that stirs up opacity, contradiction, and ambiguity suggests the issue has been poorly posed. Merleau-Ponty responds to this objection with the argument that "if we rediscover time beneath the subject, and if we relate to the paradox of time those of the body, the world, the thing, and others, we shall understand that beyond these there is nothing to understand" (p. 365).

For Merleau-Ponty, all the problems of his perception thesis prove tied to an examination of time. Time is pivotal for putting all the paradoxes he raises into their appropriate places. Given its crucial status it is not surprising that the problematic strands within Merleau-Ponty's exposition most visibly emerge in his early writings

in connection to his treatment of time. On the one hand, with regards to experiential phenomena of a higher order of complexity such as thought, reflection, or self-consciousness, the importance of time presses itself on Merleau-Ponty due to a tension generated internally by his exposition. His description of the body's non-conceptual effecting of a unity of presence works against the possibility of these higher-order phenomena as they require some self-referential distinction or break within that unity for which the body as non-conceptually effecting a unity cannot account. Merleau-Ponty invokes temporality to provide this account. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty is pushed from the outside to accord time a crucial status because he is attempting to overcome the Cartesian tradition. The Cartesian privileging of the *cogito* stems from Descartes' construal of thinking in terms of thought's presence to itself. On Merleau-Ponty's interpretation, Descartes' attribution of self-presence to thought is directly analogous to the transcendentalist attribution of all-constituting power to consciousness. The latter presupposed an ideal of full explicitation that was only possible through a denial of the body's opacity to perception; analogously, the attributing of self-presence to thought as postulated by Descartes presupposes a *domination* over time that is only possible through a denial of the temporal continuity of the body being opaque to thought and reflection.

Confronting Descartes: self-presence, "givenness", and bad ambiguity

Merleau-Ponty takes issue with Descartes (1642/1964) on the theme of self-presence exactly as it relates to time. On Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962) construal of the *cogito, ergo sum* argument, the self-presence asserted here amounts to a

negation of time and an impossible assumption of eternity (pp. 370-4).[7] Merleau-Ponty's construal of Decartes' argument is that the doubting I of Descartes' initial meditation appears insuperable as it can doubt anything. But upon the reflection of the second meditation, the reflecting I of a later moment brought to bear on the doubting I of the earlier moment, affirms the indubitability of the 'I think' present across both moments. On the basis of this reflective capture across moments that constitutes in indubitability the thinking I of the *cogito*, Descartes posits the existent I of the *sum*, and thus makes the premise (for the continuity of identity over time of the existent I as a "thinking thing") the self-constituting power of thinking to assert its presence across moments. Through thought's thinking itself – presenting itself to itself – over time I know myself as a "thinking thing" (Descartes equates thought with thinking thing as a matter of course; their identity is a given (cf. 1642/1964, p. v)).

Merleau-Ponty focuses on the purported *mastery* or *domination of time* attributed to the power of thought in Descartes' argument, a mastery that amounts to a negation of time in overcoming the temporal dispersion of moments. Accepting that the minimal definition of thought is a self-conscious (or reflexive) consciousness of an object, Merleau-Ponty reasons as follows. Descartes is proposing that the reflective capture across moments, which is the very action of thought thinking itself, is a *self-identical* thought. The continuity of thought provides the "thinking thing" with the self-presence it needs to know it indubitably exists – that is, possesses continuity over time. The continuity of thought is the basis for a continuity of identity that is

self-identical over time. This presupposes that, first, the very action of thinking establishes thought (or consciousness or mind) outside time: thought is timeless and eternal. Second, if thinking does not take place in time, the positing of an existent self that follows from thought's self-presence is either impossible or unnecessary. Consciousness is absolute. Either "my mind is God" or "it is ultimately with God that the *cogito* brings me into coincidence" (pp. 372-3).[8]

These considerations on their own are sufficient to condemn Descartes' position for Merleau-Ponty, as is their implication of a fully sufficient "hermetically sealed self" (p. 373) which closes us off and locks us up within ourselves. This is not a new criticism, of course, but a reiteration of the critical movement Merleau-Ponty undertakes in order to restore the perceiver's relation of openness to the world (whether as spatial, sexual, or objective), to others, to history, and penultimately, to time, but on this occasion the criticism is specific to the theme of thought. Merleau-Ponty strives to limit the absolute, timeless pretension of thought to a self-presence by arguing that since "it is achieved in the *cogito*, [it] shall never be a real coincidence, but merely an intentional and presumptive one" (p. 344). Only if thought could leave the body entirely could it escape its inherence in time and coincide in a presence-to-itself that would be perfect identity. Merleau-Ponty's aim through disclosing the bodily roots of thinking is to demonstrate that thought never entirely leaves the body and through this demonstration block thought's escape from time.

The difficulty Merleau-Ponty faces in attempting to provide an account of the bodily roots of thinking is formidable, in no small part due to the internal logic of his perception thesis. What he needs above all is some sort of distinction or marker within the experiential unity of presence that can refer the body away from the world in which it is continuously immersed and instead back to itself. Foreshadowing the exposition he undertakes in 'The *cogito*' chapter, he explicitly acknowledges on different occasions the need for some sort of self-referring capability, but the very manner in which he asserts this need betrays an uncertainty.

In the preceding chapter, 'Other selves and the human world', Merleau-Ponty reiterates a series of similar assertions. First, in the context of addressing the problem of how I can understand another as a conscious subject like myself, Merleau-Ponty offers an answer in terms of mutually reciprocating limitations that open myself to the other. On the one hand, the other is a perceiving subject open to the world through the particularity of a perspective as I am, and so he is no different than me. On the other hand, I cannot totally identify with him or encapsulate his perspective because I prove unable to look upon my own body as being exclusively an object as he can. The latter inability is crucial, but not self-evident: I only come to consciousness of this incapacity to fully objectify myself "if I find in myself, through reflection, along with the perceiving subject, a pre-personal subject given to itself" (pp. 352-3). The claim underlines the need for some self-reference in order, not to realize a total self-contained identity of my pre-personal subjectivity, but to discover the shortcomings inherent to this subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty leaves the

claim at that point, and how this "givenness" to the pre-personal subject will be "found" left unaddressed.

A similar pattern recurs in the context of addressing the problem of solipsism. Merleau-Ponty argues that within our experience of others lies the common origin of both solitude and communication since both the capacity to withdraw as well as to engage with others requires that we were already intertwined in some way that makes those choices possible. Merleau-Ponty claims this experience of others is analogous to reflection in that "what is given and initially true, is a reflection open to the unreflective, the reflective assumption of the unreflective" (p. 359). Similarly solitude or communication with another are alternate ways of configuring one's openness to another or different manners of assuming a relatedness from which it is impossible to prescind. The problem relative to the above citation wherein I ostensibly "find through reflection" a "pre-personal subject given to itself", is that the "givens" are multiplied as reflection in turn proves to be itself "given and initially true". To compound this incrementing of "givens", Merleau-Ponty makes the additional claim:

> The central phenomenon, at the root of both my subjectivity and my transcendence towards others, consists in my being given to myself. I am given, that is, I find myself already situated and involved in a physical and social world – I am given to myself, which means that this situation is never hidden from me, it is never round about me as an alien necessity, and I am never in effect enclosed in it like an object in a box. (p. 360)

The insistent repetition of my being "given to myself" clearly underlines its importance, but a series of assertions does not a demonstration make. Merleau-Ponty has yet to elaborate exactly how it is I can be "given to myself" (as a personal

subject), or how a pre-personal subject is given to itself, or how reflection is given. That being "given to myself" entails "finding myself" in a situation which constitutes me without "enclosing" my self is an important clue, particularly in light of its rejoining the discussion of passivity above which was advanced in precisely those terms. But what is lacking is how I come to have any self-referential distance, whether personally upon myself, or pre-personally as a subject upon itself, or between reflection and the unreflective, such that these are sufficiently differentiated that one can be "given" or come to a "self-presence" upon oneself. The exposition of Merleau-Ponty's conception of perceptual experience made it clear that the very action of embodiment as a modality of consciousness was to lose the subject for the sake of its objects, and that in so doing it effected the field as an undivided unity of experience. What Merleau-Ponty requires is some way to bring back the subject into the field as a subject in such a way that it is not merely dissolved into the world as usual but rather asserts some distinctiveness for itself through gaining some distance or differentiation within an otherwise unbroken presence. For Descartes, thought achieved this distance and self-defining distinctiveness through its own self-constituting activity which breaks the thinker free of time. Merleau-Ponty wishes to achieve a lesser version of this thesis. However, he needs to first expose thought's presumption to eternal timeless self-presence as untenable. He aims to do so through finding the manner of the body's inherence in time such that the subject gains reflective distance on itself. In accomplishing this aim, Merleau-Ponty argues that the subject through the body

comes to an existential version of self-presence which neither escapes time nor proves capable of mastering or dominating time.

There is no doubt that the difficulties Merleau-Ponty faces in attempting to provide an existential account for self-presence push his thinking to the limit and undo his exposition relative to the themes of the *cogito* and temporality. It is here that my interpretive tactic of reading Merleau-Ponty against himself through revising the earlier work in light of his later work comes most explicitly to the fore. To fail to do so is to let the best kernels of insight that fall from his philosophy become lost to incoherence. Conversely, in selectively gleaning the *Phenomenology of perception* in this way, any aspiration to a foundation for knowledge based on perceptual experience falls away. Clarifying Merleau-Ponty's early work in this way corresponds to the gradual development of his thought over his lifetime which moves from an initial, uncertain entertaining of a foundational possibility (as implied in his vestigial transcendental orientation, as well as his championing of a "phenomenological positivism") to its definite dismissal. At the center of this process of clarification is the role of language, which Merleau-Ponty comes to increasingly incorporate (as noted at the beginning of this chapter, to the point where language supercedes perception in importance) through the theme of expression.

My interpretation here is justified in large part because Merleau-Ponty himself appears to support such a self-criticism. In his already much-cited 1952 letter to

Martial Gueroult that provides one of his clearest self-commentaries, Merleau-Ponty (1964a) declares "the study of perception could only teach us a 'bad ambiguity'... [b]ut there is a 'good ambiguity' in the phenomenon of expression" (p. 11). In *Signs* Merleau-Ponty (1960/1964c) writes: "All perception, all action which presupposes it, and in short every human use of the body is already *primordial expression*" (p. 67. Original emphases.). One particularly clear example of the transition in Merleau-Ponty's understanding is evident in the modification of his statement in 'The *cogito*' chapter that "self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action" (p. 371) to one in 1952 that reads "expression is [the mind's] existence in act" (1960/1964c, p. 79). Although the modification appears slight, its significance is far-reaching. In terms of gleaning the text selectively to retain its best insights and discard its incoherent lapses, the significance of understanding thought as expression rather than self-consciousness affords a principle of interpretation to apply to those passages rife with "bad ambiguity". In dealing with the problems of the *cogito*, of reflection, and of time, Merleau-Ponty falls into bad ambiguity in each case: first, through offering an intellectualist account of the body; second, in suggesting a foundational account through conflating perception and language; and third, through construing time as naturalistic. The following sections deal with these three problems respectively.

The problem of the *cogito*: thought and expression

In keeping with his aim to overcome the Cartesian *cogito* and root the self-presence of thought to itself within the body, Merleau-Ponty claims neither "self-possession" nor "coincidence with the self" "serve to define thought". To the contrary, thought

"is an outcome of expression and always an illusion, in so far as the clarity of what is acquired rests upon the fundamentally obscure operation which has enabled us to immortalize within ourselves a moment of fleeting life" (p. 389). Rather than a continuity of thought standing outside time and guaranteeing a self-identical presence over time, Merleau-Ponty argues that the "immortalizing" of a "fleeting moment" underlies the "clarity" of thought. In fact thought's clarity is "illusory", because precisely how this "immortalizing" has been accomplished is a "fundamentally obscure operation".

The mention of obscurity means that Merleau-Ponty is talking of the non-conceptual power of the body. The "operation" of "immortalizing" brings together two aspects of embodiment: the first is the body's ability to effect through its action the perception of an object in the immediately present world, although how it does so is unknown. The second is the body's ability to effect the passage of time, but this temporal continuity lies on the "hither side" of the opacity of the body. Somehow, these two actions of the body are brought together: perception of a "moment of fleeting life" through some "expression" has become conjoined to our temporal continuity such that the moment endures in its identity as a particular moment despite the passage of time. Expression somehow captures the past moment as possessed of some identity – but crucially, *the identity of this moment*, as guaranteed by our own bodily enduring over time which itself is never guaranteed but is both existentially contingent and opaque to thought, is therefore *inaccessible to thought*. This expressive activity must be fundamentally different

from a past moment's being incorporated into the body in an irretrievable fashion for the moment *is* retrievable, through its expression, to become immediately present to the perceiver "in thought", and does so with "clarity". The *how* of this "immortalizing", that ties some moment to its expression, is "fundamentally obscure" in precisely the same sense that perception of something depends on an "I can" for which I cannot account: I do not know how it is my body effects its action of seeing, grasping or moving just as I do not know how I apprehend what is expressed through an expression. Incorporating expressive means extends the non-conceptual action of the body to reach or grasp what is before it to the whole range of what can be expressed. This extraordinary amplification of perception through expression radically expands the freedom of the perceiving subject, from the freedom to explore the world immediately present before one to the incomparable freedom of exploring all that is *not immediately present*. As Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) will express it in the "Working Notes" to *The visible and the invisible*: "there is all the same this difference between perception and language, that I see the perceived things and that the significations on the contrary are invisible" (p. 214). All that is mediately present – that is, present through an expression – is suddenly arrayed before the subject and the differentiated unity of the phenomenal field ramifies into a temporalized field of possibilities, of the retrievable past, of potential futures, of the imagination, and so on. Through expression, existence becomes conscious existence. As Merleau-Ponty (1964/1973b) states unequivocally later: "As a phenomenon of expression, language is constitutive of consciousness" (p.50).[9]

Expression incorporated into the body reiterates the perceptual faith that what the body grasps (in this case through an expression) is incontestably present to the subject. This faith depends crucially on the body's forgetting its contribution to this experience. Just as perception takes the perceived thing as real and existent in-and-of-itself as if it owed nothing to its means of embodiment, so too what is expressed is grasped as if it exists independently of, and owes nothing to, its means of expression.

> The wonderful thing about language is that it promotes its own oblivion. ...Expression fades out before what is expressed. ...This certainty which we enjoy of reaching, beyond expression, a truth separable from it and of which expression is merely the garment and contingent manifestation, has been implanted in us precisely by language. (p. 401)

This description transposes Merleau-Ponty's outline of perceptual experience in terms of its basic parameters of perception, objectivity, and embodiment, into those of expression, truth, and language respectively. Perception promises us the object as a thing-in-itself separable from our embodying the object's appearance through exactly the action of the body which "promotes its own oblivion". If language enables expression to attain a similar achievement with respect to truth, this achievement is due to language performing its expressive action through the body. Unfortunately, the transposability of the descriptions of the body in expressive action and of the body in perception appears to lead Merleau-Ponty into bad ambiguity as in spite of his insistence on the importance of expression he equally as often bypasses expression as if the body can effect the perception of time, the past, or itself, without needing expression. The too-broad term 'perception' serves to

hide, in a "bad" way, this ambiguity, as comes out most clearly when Merleau-Ponty invokes a "tacit *cogito*".

> I should be unable to even to read Descartes' book, were I not, before any speech can begin, in contact with my own life and thought, and if the spoken *cogito* did not encounter within me a tacit *cogito*. (p. 402)
>
> Thus language presupposes nothing less than a consciousness of language... Behind the spoken *cogito*, the one which is converted into discourse and into essential truth, there lies a tacit *cogito*, myself experienced by myself. (p. 403)

By characterizing the tacit *cogito* in these ways, Merleau-Ponty in effect counters any need for language or expression. Contradicting his earlier claims, invoking a tacit *cogito* suggests the body is, somehow and inexplicably, already capable of affording itself self-referentiality and hence consciousness. In running the roles of the body and language together Merleau-Ponty lapses into an intellectualism of a 'bodily thinking'. (He later acknowledges that "the "tacit *cogito*" is impossible... it is necessary to have words" (1964/1968, p. 171).) The "bad ambiguity" of perception confuses the roles the body and language play within experience, as opposed to the "good ambiguity" of expression which clearly differentiates the two in order to sustain each in a tension to the other as the paradoxical relation that realizes and constitutes experience.

These characterizations of the tacit *cogito* also promote the suggestion that my body, or more precisely embodiment as a modality of consciousness, composes as it were an independent, *foundational* 'layer' upon which language and expression as another layer is overlaid. This makes the problems of thought and language into problems of how each are already prefigured in the body.[10] Interpreting Merleau-

Ponty in this manner would assert that thought, and its exemplary characteristics of providing the truth and self-presence, 'needs' language for speaking merely in order to make explicit – an act which is nothing more than a repeating out loud – what *the body is already thinking*. Language, on the other hand, is at best a convenience and at worst unnecessary, as the body does not need any expressive means in order to bring itself into self-presence. The difference between the *cogito* that is spoken and one that is tacit is merely a matter of interposing some verbal noise irrelevant to the consciousness at work in either.

This manner of interpreting the body, language, thought, and their relationships could not be more astonishing. Merleau-Ponty's critique of both the empiricism of science and the intellectualism of philosophy was that each substitutes the thought of perception for the embodied experience of perception, yet suddenly at the climax of outlining his existential alternative the body is unveiled as having been all along a "tacit I think"! The astonishment deepens as the rich and eloquent account of language as non-conceptually embodied expression that Merleau-Ponty offers throughout the *Phenomenology of perception*, much of which occurs on precisely these pages where he posits a tacit *cogito*, precludes the need for positing a thought beneath thought.[11] In the midst of this bad ambiguity, Merleau-Ponty's attempt to salvage the necessity of expression (such as his qualification that "the tacit *cogito* is a *cogito* only when it has found expression for itself" (p. 404)) exacerbates, rather than clarifies, the confusion.

What Merleau-Ponty's confusion does bring into the open is that his true dialectical opponent is Cartesian *disembodied* thought against which *both* the body and language stand together in perceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty's attempt to oppose the perceptual order of embodied experience to the conceptual order of reflective thought so as to extend, correct, and refine an inadequately thematized Cartesian dualism has proven too blunt an instrument. There is further evidence for this in his treatment (examined below) of the subtleties of temporality, which does not so much describe time as bludgeon it. To claim as he does that his theory of the body is already a theory of perception (p. 206) is false. The body suffices to account for a perception only if Merleau-Ponty presupposes language as part of the body. Merleau-Ponty's repeated exhortations about the necessity of expression would seem to support this option, except that equally as often he apparently disregards this necessity (as with his positing a tacit *cogito* that thinks itself without any expressive means). Or, a second option would consist in not differentiating language from the body as if their differentiation was insignificant. But Merleau-Ponty's bad ambiguity of his early work, and consistent focus throughout his later work, attests that this is *not* the case. Language as a third theme and the discreet companion of both mind and body has insistently come to the fore. In bearing the speech that through the body "accomplishes" thought (p. 178) language is, as it were, caught in the middle in the contest between them.

The crux of Merleau-Ponty's problem resides in thematizing the differences and relations between body and language, which are thoroughly entangled and yet

irreducible to each other. In glossing these differences and relations through the use of the term "perception" (which encompasses both; all uses of the body are already expressive, while all speech is always embodied), the confusion this causes leads him to fall back into the very antinomy between intellectualist transcendentalism and empiricist naturalism his existentially-oriented phenomenology intends to overcome. Taken altogether, these problems are presented such that they support interpreting Merleau-Ponty's work as continuing the traditional foundationalist project (most notably in suggesting an embodied self-consciousness as if it is some foundational strata upon which language and thought establish themselves), rather than his existentialist perspectivalism introducing a new orientation and shifting the criteria for evaluating thought.

Language and the body are not opposed but entangled, with Merleau-Ponty overdoing his opposition to a Cartesian disembodied mind and consequently overemphasizing the role of the body. As a result, he minimizes the distinctiveness not only of the respective contributions of mind, language, and body in making experience what it is, but also overlooks the crucial importance of all those distinctions that follow from recognition of the body/language difference: most fundamentally the distinction between implicit and explicit and, accompanying this distinction, that between the pre-personal subject and the personal subject, and between third-person description and first-person speech. In each case the first term (the implicit, the pre-personal subject, and third-person description) is the embodied side of language as the anonymous subjectivity of general human being: culture,

society, history, institutions, and if I understand Pierre Bourdieu (1990) correctly, it is what he designates "habitus". As systematically established expressions the latter structure this anonymous subjectivity, while as expressions always requiring inhabiting and animating by persons they also sustain this anonymous subjectivity through their constant enactment in being embodied. The latter term (the explicit, the personal subject, and first-person speech) is precisely human beings as persons constantly emerging and asserting themselves as individuals in relation to each other against the background of this anonymously structured subjectivity which is our body that lives us and which we take up as 'ours' without ever wholly possessing in explicit consciousness.

In the previous section Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the relation between oneself and others culminated in a problematic compounding of "givens": reflection on the unreflected was given, the pre-personal subject was given to itself, the personal subject was given to itself (see pp. 205-7 above). Merleau-Ponty did not explicate this "givenness" beyond connecting it to his notion of passivity as the taking up of a situation that envelops one and wherein one "finds" oneself. The bad ambiguity created through his invoking a "tacit *cogito*" results in a "giving" of oneself to oneself that is at best a confusion. Reading Merleau-Ponty against himself entails sustaining the recognition of the need for expression he voices in other passages. Expression provides a way to characterize "givenness" through transforming the body's realizing the richly differentiated structure of the phenomenal field (that was described in the previous chapter as *perception)* into an enacting of a field of extant

expression. In the case of an expressive field before the subject, its richly differentiated structure is the subject's social, cultural, and historical world. The *activity* of the pre-personal subjectivity of the body realizing this field implies the *passivity* of the subject as an individual person (who did not create, nor can significantly affect or alter the field) situated against the social-cultural-historical world. To make this implied passivity of the person explicit is to actively constitute the personal consciousness of an individual subject. This constitutive action is always after the fact, after the implicitly lived moment (prior to this constitution through a making explicit there was neither an explicit/implicit distinction, nor an active/passive distinction). As always trailing after the experience's having been lived, this constitutive action is a reflective capture in the present of the past across time and therefore a mastery of time, but a mastery that can only ever be partial and limited. For one, it is a limited mastery over time because it presupposes the bodily guarantee of a temporal continuity that is always opaque to consciousness, and second, as a constitutive action of making explicit it affirms the always passive situatedness of the personal subject over against the very expressions the subject needs to actively constitute itself as conscious.

Maintaining recognition of the need for expression allows for the characterization of "givenness" in terms that retain and extend Merleau-Ponty's exposition of perception, from the embodied agency of one's pre-personal, anonymous subjectivity effecting the perceptual field to my personal agency in constituting myself upon that body over against that field understood as expressive. Applied to

the compound problem of the "givenness" of reflection, of the pre-personal subject, and of the personal subject, yields the following: what "gives" the unreflective to reflection is precisely the act of *making* the (implicitly lived) unreflective moment *explicit* through a *personal agency* that enacts the extant expressive structures of the social-cultural-historical world – in a word, language – through the body. What "gives" the pre-personal subject to itself is an act of *personal expression* that in virtue of the ambiguous subjectivity that characterizes all bodily action is never the exclusive property of that person but is always simultaneously expressive of the social, cultural, and historical. And thirdly, what "gives" me to myself is a *taking responsibility* for the otherwise impersonal domain of third-person description through its explicitation into first-person locutions: my identity is at stake, this is who I am, here I stand, and so on. The 'I' is an active assertion of self through making itself explicit, most paradigmatically and powerfully in first-person speech, in an action that "resumes" our implicit "being in a situation" which defined passivity and was "constitutive of us". In each case these descriptions of self-presence or self-referentiality as a "givenness" to self lack the problems plaguing his notion of the tacit *cogito* and are pivotal for extending Merleau-Ponty's existential elaboration of the appeal to experience.

In countering Merleau-Ponty's lapse into an intellectualist understanding of the body upon his confrontation with Descartes, the recognition of the need for expression as a clarificatory reading of Merleau-Ponty's early work will also prove to address the corollary to his intellectualist lapse, which is his naturalistic

conception of time. Expression is the key for providing a genuinely existential, non-naturalistic account of time in providing, in a manner homologous to the body's breaking into the world to effect a perspective, a break into time to effect a self-referential point of view. It also proves the key for blocking the foundationalist reading of Merleau-Ponty's intentions, for expression provides the means to keep the role of the body distinct from that of language.

The problem of reflection: foundationalism and the *Fundierung* relationship

Merleau-Ponty's description of the *Fundierung* relation raises the issue of ascertaining foundations. The problem of what founds what, or presupposes, grounds, or takes priority – in short, the question of *what lies at the origin*, is crucial for elucidating the appeal to experience, lies at the core of empiricism and positivism as well as the transcendental philosophy of consciousness, and is a theme that runs throughout all Merleau-Ponty's work (being given its most definitive treatment in *The visible and the invisible*). His description of the *Fundierung* relation is as crucial to his enterprise, and to conceptualizing the relationship between the body and language as making up 'perception', as it is difficult.

> The relation of reason to fact, or eternity to time, like that of reflection to the unreflective, of thought to language or of thought to perception is this two-way relationship that phenomenology has called *Fundierung*: the founding term, or originator – time, the unreflective, the fact, language, perception – is primary in the sense that the originated is presented as a determinate or explicit form of the originator, which prevents the latter from reabsorbing the former, and yet the originator is not primary in the empiricist sense and the originated is not simply derived from it, since it is through the originated that the originator is made manifest. (p. 394)

The "founding term", or "originator" (which Merleau-Ponty lists as time, the unreflective, the fact, language, perception, respectively) is "primary". It is not

primary in "the empiricist sense", which entails that primary does not mean causally prior or in any mechanistic manner 'external' to the "originated". The originator is primary in that it is *presupposed as existent* by the originated term. However, since the originator "depends" on the originated to make the originator "manifest" *to consciousness* (without which consciousness, there would be neither presupposing of the originator's existence nor 'knowing' of it in any way), the relationship between the originator and originated is not one of "derivation" but is somehow "two-way". Understanding the *Fundierung* relation in this reflexively-dependent way uncovers the question of 'the origin' to be the attempt to ascertain *the origin of consciousness*, and the phenomenological originator/originated distinction to correspond to the existential distinction between the lived and the known. So there will be no answer forthcoming or solution to these problems Merleau-Ponty raises, but there is insight to be gained in clearing up some of the difficulty concerning the nature of this dependence of the originator, which is primary in some unclear sense, on the originated (which is not primary, but neither is it "derived" from the originator). The originated "presents" the originator in its "determinate or explicit form" without the originated being "derived" from the originator. Matched to their originator, the originated terms are eternity, reflection, reason, thought, respectively (which is, significantly, to contrast thought *to both language and perception*). Eternity is presented as the determinate or explicit form of time, reflection the explicit form of the unreflected, reason the determinate form of fact, and thought the determinate form of language, or of perception – or possibly of both language and perception together.

In keeping with my interpretive strategy, this conflation of language and perception presents itself as the problem with the solution residing in the recognition of expression as providing precisely the hinge on which the reflexivity of the *Fundierung* relation of originator to originated swings. Merleau-Ponty's placing of language alongside time, the unreflective, and the fact, implies that language is not essential to enabling the various expressive means of manifesting these different 'terms' into their determinate forms. As suggested in the previous section, the problem stems from his opposing the conceptual order of reflective thought by the perceptual order of embodied existence proving too blunt an instrument. Language as crucial to the mediation of the perceptual and conceptual needs to be emphasized and distinguished, too. The reflexive complexity of the reflective/unreflective relation points to a dynamic of entanglement and mutual irreducibility that depicts Merleau-Ponty's conception of foundationalist intent and his manner of working. Merleau-Ponty is suggesting that reflection may in truth be an insoluble problem but also therefore an endless spur to creativity, justifying the characterization of the philosopher as a perpetual beginner. In this light Merleau-Ponty's dialectical approach, not to effect a synthesis but to uncover the unity the dialectical relation presupposes, as well as his claim that "the most important lesson which the [phenomenological] reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (p. xiv), take on their full significance. As well, what Merleau-Ponty's invoking the *Fundierung* relation does bring out clearly with regards to the problem of foundations apparently necessitating a settling of the question 'What is the

origin?' is his aim to disempower the epistemological demand for a resolution, and shift the center of gravity for questioning to existential grounds.

Just as the ideal of full explicitation is impossible, the question of 'the origin' cannot be settled. In order for reflection to open onto unreflected experience, the body in its perceptual capacity to realize the presence of the thing to itself has to be brought to bear on the unreflected experience as embodied through an expression. As with perception, the embodying of the object (in this case the unreflected) promises us the object-in-itself. But the unreflected as the general, anonymous past my pre-personal subjective body lives is always made manifest through my personal agency that makes it explicit. The necessity of reflection always working through my individual person puts me at the center and runs up therefore against my passivity, my inner weakness that signals the limit from which I perceive, that imperceptible vantage point whose hither side proves opaque to reflection as it was never experienced. The origin, like our birth, is lost to mystery within the opacity of our primary past, which correspondingly alters criteria for truth or universality. These criteria can no longer bypass the individual subject in favor of a supra-individual foundation, whether in an empiricist building block or in a transcendental consciousness.

> Reflection on language now consists not in returning to a transcendental subject, disengaged from all actual linguistic situations, but to a speaking subject who has no access to any truth nor to any thought with a claim to universality except through the practice of his language in a definite linguistic situation. (1964a, p. 82)

Accepting that the question of an ultimate founding origin is out of reach effects a refocusing onto the speaking subject and the act of making explicit the quest for a foundation required. To ask 'Where do I come from?' proves intractable, but its impossibility for knowledge does not therefore render the question senseless. Its existential sense is to affirm a significance to our feeling life and hence recognize other ways in which we are bound to each other, whether in fear and anxiety or awe and wonder. What is the implicit background situating the question? And, since to make the implicit explicit requires a reflecting, thinking individual, the further question "who is thinking?" (p. 62) emerges as central. The question of the origin that would found knowledge objectively, outside and disengaged from my personal subjectivity, is displaced to the question of my person, my language, and my situation. To answer these latter questions requires an acknowledgment along with the 'I think' of my belonging to my self and to the world and necessitates recourse to my feeling life which is "primary" in the strange "dependent" sense of relying upon its being made manifest to thought or consciousness in being made explicit through expression. "What is believed to be thought about thought, as pure feeling of the self, cannot yet be thought and needs to be revealed" (p. 404). The foundational search for an origin to ground the truth of our knowledge in a certainty and clarity of thought made fully self-present through reflection, is shifted to existential grounds of the subject's nonrational relations to a situation when the recognition of the role of the body and expression in enabling thought and reflection introduces the obscurities, opacity, limitations, and paradoxes that are the stuff of my personal life. This is not to give up on truth, but to shift its criteria from an

epistemological conception to an existential one: "Metaphysics begins from the moment when, ceasing to live in the evidence of the object… we apperceive the radical subjectivity of all our experience as inseparable from its truth value" (1948/1964b, p. 93).

Epistemology lives in the evidence of the object. Recognizing the essential contribution of the subject's embodiment for realizing the object lays bare, not a new epistemological foundation but a certain limit to reflection within the body (in life) which, in making impossible the ideal of full explicitation or an explicitated origin, undermines the foundationalist impulse and shifts from an epistemological to an existential focus. "Indeed… it is no longer possible to found all relation on the activity of the 'epistemological subject'"(1942/1963, p. 172). This entails that the foundational priority of questions or assertions is gone, that "there are no principal and subordinate problems: all problems are concentric" (p. 410), and that "our research must be concentric rather than hierarchized" (1964a, p. 36). Most significantly there is a movement toward a new center of gravity oriented around an affirmation of passivity that signals an alternative ideal of knowledge and truth.

The affirmation of passivity can be understood as a reflexive unfolding in depth, that if pursued in depth first opens beyond the individual person into the social-cultural-historical world, and possibly yet further to intimate the mystery at the base of the world. As initially characterized the recognition of passivity carried with it description in the language of feeling. Feeling appears as the mediator between our

explicit consciousness and the unsurpassable mystery the limits of which we implicitly and indirectly intimate. In bridging this divide between what is explicitly determinate and an opaque mystery, the nonrational and equivocal character that marks feeling would seem to appropriately express its mediate position and cast serious doubt on its feasibility as a foundation for any epistemological malingerer. Feeling's nonrational, equivocal character is not a defect but signals its fecundity as a theme, for it is expressively structured in a manner that we pre-personally live and which forms the base for the formation of our personality and self-understanding. "Feelings and passional conduct... are in reality institutions" (p. 189) that compose the relational, intersubjective strata which is history and the real and realized ground upon which we constitute our individuality as persons through taking it over and making it explicit. Through understanding feeling as an institution, Merleau-Ponty's claim that the mind "needs simpler activities in order to stabilize itself in durable institutions and to realize itself truly as mind" (1964a, p. 4) takes on a deeper significance.[12]

The interpretation of Merleau-Ponty along foundationalist lines had some grounds due to strong claims about "the perceived world" as "the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" or, that "all consciousness is perceptual, even the consciousness of ourselves" (1964a, p. 13), as well as due to Merleau-Ponty's use of terms like "phenomenological positivism" or his lapses into bad ambiguity that suggest a foundationalist reading. But in other instances Merleau-Ponty qualifies his work along non- or post-foundational lines, and

following the corrective interpretation of his claims undertaken in this section we are in a position to appreciate these qualifications. He explicitly states that in addition to his theory of perceptual existence it is also "necessary to develop a theory of imaginary existence and of ideal existence" (1964a, p. 40), and further, "knowledge and the communication with others which it presupposes not only are original formations with respect to the perceptual life but also they preserve and continue our perceptual life even while transforming it" (1964a, p. 7). In other words, an account of perception is 'foundational' as that which "initiated us into the truth" (1964a, p. 3) in that perception is always present and thus including it is always necessary in any account of higher-order phenomena such as culture, the imagination, or ideation. However, taking perception on its own is not sufficient to account for higher-order phenomena, but in every higher-order domain perception is "preserved" but "transformed" in domain-specific ways. Confirming this idea, Merleau-Ponty says in his article *Metaphysics in man* that "It would obviously be in order to give a precise description of the passage of perceptual faith into explicit truth as we encounter it on the level of language, concept, and the cultural world" (1948/1964b, p. 94n13). Each level (imagination, ideation, communication, culture, and so on) asserts some distinctiveness, but simultaneously there is a distinctive contribution from perception at work at each level: "we find in perception a mode of access to the object which is rediscovered at every level" (1964a, p. 34).

Merleau-Ponty's claim of the "primacy of perception" would seem to be that the distinctive attribute of 'embodiment' as a general modality of consciousness present

in all experience means that consciousness is always *qualified* such that experience necessarily *must be* an indivisible unity of presence before the subject. Embodiment as a modality is more 'lived' than 'known' and therefore posited upon reflection by conceptual thought as non-conceptual. Other modalities of consciousness – language, the imagination, ideation, etc. – also make distinctive contributions to experience through qualifying consciousness in a manner specific to each modality, but regardless of what these contributions are the qualification that embodiment asserts is that their contribution be incorporated into an experiential unity. In the most generalized terms, all modalities contribute *divisively* to consciousness, which does not fragment experience but *differentiates* the experiential unity of consciousness. Although the contribution of each modality of consciousness is singular or partial, in virtue of the body's assertion of unity the effects of each modality's qualification of experience are total.[13] Subsequently no modality of consciousness could be said to have an absolute privilege over any other, rather the priority of any particular modality relative to other modalities must always be judged relative to its distinctive contribution, in the sense of distinctive qualification of experience. Merleau-Ponty's ultimate aim in relativizing priority always through recognition of other modalities comes out most clearly when he claims (1964a) that his view of perception *does not have* a "monopoly on truth", even as in advancing his view of perception it takes away the "monopoly on truth" of the scientist (pp. 34-5). The assessment of priority depends above all, then, on the type of question asked, on the types of examples used, in terms of the fit of the question or example (which are always necessarily selective) to the contribution of the modality.[14] The

most dramatic example of this notion of a distinctive contribution to consciousness, that preserves and continues while transforming our perceptual life, is language, which transforms perception into expression. In terms of its distinctive contribution as the capacity to express or signify and the division and differentiation into consciousness it introduces, this is best demonstrated by way of application to Merleau-Ponty's third central problematic exposition, that of time, where he falls into bad ambiguity again. For it is my interpretation that precisely what language 'gives' us, through breaking us from the timelessness of our perceptual existence, is time, such that our life could be said to be differentiated into a temporality of past, present, and future.

The problem of temporality: naturalistic time

In his discussion of the *cogito* Merleau-Ponty overextended the body's reach in blurring the differences between language and body in realizing perceptual experience. This overextension led to numerous claims suggesting language was not essential and arrogated a constitutive power to the body equivalent to that of thought. At the same time he made numerous assertions as to the necessity of language and continued his aim to restore the world of perception through demonstrating the role of the body in experience and in particular its passivity relative to an opacity it cannot overcome thereby limiting thought's constitutive power. These conflicting conceptions manifest in Merleau-Ponty's account of temporality in a way that Moran (2000) describes as "unsatisfactory" and "contradictory" (p. 426). However, as Merleau-Ponty himself urges, and as the problem of the *cogito* and the problem of reflection both attest, the problem of time

is crucial to his entire undertaking and requires a clarification that brings out the distinctive and indispensable role of language. In so doing his exposition of time provides the key to consolidating and extending his account of the phenomenal field as summarized under the thesis of a "primacy of perception" laid out in the previous chapter.

In the crucial chapter 'Temporality' in the *Phenomenology of perception* Merleau-Ponty makes a series of conflicting and contradictory claims over the space of only a few pages. The past and future "spring forth when I reach out towards them" and their unity is owed to there being a "passage of one present to the next" because "I effect it" (p. 421). Merleau-Ponty gives further support to time's depending on this constitutive power of mine: "time exists for me because I have a present", and "we hold time in its entirety" (p. 424), presumably because the different moments of past, present, and future only come to be "when a subjectivity is there to disrupt the plenitude of being in itself, to adumbrate a perspective, and introduce non-being into it" (p. 421). It is clear from these descriptions that time and temporality depend upon my subjectivity. However, Merleau-Ponty has on other occasions claimed that "Because I am borne into personal existence by a time which I do not constitute, all my perceptions stand out against a background of nature" (p. 347). In the space of the very same pages wherein I appear to be solely responsible for constituting time, Merleau-Ponty appears to lend equally conclusive support to my depending on the constitutive power of time, and to its 'naturalness'. The past and future "possess a natural and primordial unity" (p. 419), while "it is indeed clear that I am not the

creator of time any more than of my heart-beats. I am not the initiator of the process of temporalization; I did not choose to come into the world, yet once I am born, time flows through me, whatever I do" (p. 427). This is certainly "a philosophy of the ambiguous" (a phrase used by Alphonse de Waelhens to describe Merleau-Ponty's philosophy (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1942/1963, Foreword)), but, as Dermot Moran's (2000) phenomenologically retrograde and, I would argue, erroneous suggestion at the conclusion to his synopsis confirms – that "Merleau-Ponty may be read profitably as espousing naturalism" (p. 433) – a bad ambiguity indeed.[15]

My interpretation how someone as avowedly phenomenological as Merleau-Ponty could be seen to "espouse naturalism" is that it composes the flip side of the same problem that led him to forward an intellectualist construal of the body as thinking when dealing with the *cogito*. Naturalism and intellectualism are the attitudes underlying the empiricism-transcendentalism antinomy which Merleau-Ponty inherits. Without an adequate thematization of language as expression, his counter to the power of the Cartesian tradition proved to render the body capable of doing everything language and thought can do. To combat this intellectualizing of the body he then falls into positing time as naturalistic ("the natural and primordial unity of time", "flows through me, whatever I do") in order to block the otherwise all-constituting power, no longer of thought, but of perception ("we hold time in its entirety" and its unity "springs forth" because we "effect its passage"). This is bad ambiguity and these are examples not of his corrective dialectic but of a regression to the very antinomy Merleau-Ponty has aspired to overcome. His confrontation

with Descartes and the ensuing philosophical tradition that culminates in Husserl's articulation of transcendental consciousness as constitutive of the world forces Merleau-Ponty's hand and in so doing exposes the deepest difficulty internal to his primacy of perception thesis.

For the philosophy of consciousness reflection as a return to the self affords a self-presence that is self-identical over time which therefore escapes time into eternity. Thought becomes an all-constituting power of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty aims to prevent this escape into eternity and block the absoluteness of thought's constitutive power through describing thought's necessary and inescapable inherence in perceptual experience, a description that at the same time aspires to explain how the illusion of eternity and pretension to absoluteness also emerge from embodied existence. Due to the bad ambiguity of perception however, which he later identifies by contrasting it to the good ambiguity of expression and which I have summarized as conflating rather than differentiating the roles of embodiment and language in realizing experience, he reiterates at the bodily level of perceptual experience the philosophy of consciousness' account of self-presence as self-identity over time. This reiteration of the priorities of the philosophy of consciousness is evident in numerous assertions of the identity, sameness, or coinciding of the body and time, of existence and consciousness, and of life and thought. Ironically, given Merleau-Ponty's account of perception as the non-conceptual action of effecting an experiential unity of presence, it is how the body and time ever came to be differentiated at all such that there is a need to assert their

identity which is the problem. The action of the body to effect a unity cannot therefore simultaneously effect a division. Merleau-Ponty certainly realizes that a division or breaking of time into moments is needed – "the 'instants' A, B, and C are not successively in being, but differentiate themselves from each other" (p. 419) – but he does not appear to realize that given his account of perception this differentiation of time is precisely what stands in need of an account. In the context of discussing "the privilege" of "the present" "because it is the zone in which being and consciousness coincide", he contrasts the present to representations of "recollection or imagination" that are, as "former" or "coming experiences", "borne into being by a primary consciousness" which is "my inner perception" (p. 424). Rather than account for these highly suspect and surprising notions of "representations", a "primary consciousness", or an "inner perception", which he introduces with neither preamble nor justification, Merleau-Ponty goes on:

> We said above that we need to arrive at a consciousness with no other behind it, which grasps its own being, and in which, in short, being and being conscious are one and the same thing. This ultimate consciousness is not an eternal subject perceiving itself in absolute transparency… it is the consciousness of the present. In the present and in perception, my being and my consciousness are at one. (p. 424)

In this way Merleau-Ponty aims to account for the pretension to the absolute self-identity of thought in the philosophy of consciousness, but these identity claims jeopardize his entire foregoing enterprise that outlined the phenomenal field in terms of a unity premised upon an imperceptible opacity. The latter as signaled by passivity was meant to display precisely the non-coincidence or non-identity of being and consciousness, and serve to limit the constitutive power of thought such that the ideal of full explicitation and completely determinate knowledge would be

abandoned. As Merleau-Ponty has become caught up again in bad ambiguity, it is not surprising that he offers a way out, arguing that a description of consciousness:

> ...must be a comprehensive project, or a view of time and the world which, in order to be apparent to itself, and in order to become explicitly what it is implicitly, that is, consciousness, needs to unfold itself into multiplicity. We must avoid conceiving as real and distinct entities either the indivisible power, or its distinct manifestations; consciousness is neither, it is both... (pp. 424-5)

No sooner does Merleau-Ponty make an unjustified statement that jeopardizes his project, which is that the body as time asserts an identity of being and consciousness, than he swings back to apparently acknowledging that the body taken on its own is insufficient to account for consciousness, but requires being made explicit. He clarifies this insufficiency and how the "distinct manifestations" of consciousness appear: the subject "provides itself with symbols of itself in both succession and multiplicity" that "*are*" the subject "since without them it would, like an inarticulate cry, fail to achieve self-consciousness" (p. 427, original emphasis). These claims are in keeping with a recognition of expression as a good ambiguity. They are also the clearest indication that for Merleau-Ponty consciousness (as 'objective' consciousness of the world and as reflective self-consciousness) is *both* the body (as "indivisible power") and expression (as "distinct manifestations"), and that these *together* give the subject time (as an "unfolding into multiplicity"). The self-presence or self-consciousness that emerges is not self-identical over time but precisely a paradoxical unity of identity and difference, the ambiguous project that is a subject. Without an account of expression, his numerous identity claims ("we must understand time as the subject and the subject as time" (p. 422)) either assert an empty drama, or worse, collapse

the difference between the body (as effecting a unity of experience) and language (as differentiating that unity through expression) into a confused identity of our embodiment and temporality. However Merleau-Ponty does not draw this conclusion, but loses the necessity of expression to the bad ambiguity of perception:

> It is of the essence of time to be not only actual time, or time which flows, but also time which is aware of itself, for the explosion or dehiscence of the present towards a future is the archetype of the relationship of self to self, and it traces out an interiority or *ipseity*. Here a light bursts forth, for here we are no longer concerned with a being which reposes within itself, but with a being the whole essence of which, like that of light, is to make visible. (p. 426)

To claim that the "essence of time" is to be "aware of itself", and that its passage "traces out an interiority" which is the "archetype" for self-consciousness, purely through its perceptual action "to make visible" like "light", returns us to Merleau-Ponty's overemphasis on perception and predilection for visual metaphors.[16] But understood exclusively in terms of bodily perception, these claims are impossible. There is neither an awareness of time, interiority, or self-consciousness, without a *differentiation of time* in breaking the unity of presence that the body effects. But in conflating language and the body Merleau-Ponty consistently misses the necessity for a break within the unity of presence.[17] This break is not the same as the opacity on the hither side of the limit the body bears in 'breaking' into the world through realizing a perspective. It is an analogous break (a clue that the body is still at work here, albeit transformed) in that the inaccessible hither side of language which 'breaks' into the otherwise timeless experience of the body realizes a perspective, but now upon oneself in the past. In so doing the advent of language also realizes reflection and its corollary self-presence, which is precisely to differentiate the

ongoing flow of time into a past, present, and future. Through expression embodied consciousness is no longer bound to the immediately present, but gains a limited and partial transcendence of the present and therefore by implication, a limited and partial mastery or domination over time.

Embodying a means of expression incorporates into the bodily present a sign, the signifying operation of which indicates something *not present* – something past or elsewhere. Whereas the action of perception as embodied and non-conceptual is to effect an experiential grasp of a field of presence before a perceiver that is a unity and to effect a passage of time that is a continuity, the sign presupposes a basic *division* between present and not-present as necessary for its signifying operation. The problem is that the body in perception cannot in the same action effect an undivided unity and a divided unity. Put differently, at minimum signification entails a double requirement. First, effecting a division between presence and non-presence, and second, the re-attachment of these moments in a signifying relation. If to perceive is to lose oneself in the world such that it appears unquestionably present and this presence is taken on faith to extend beyond the here-and-now to all potential times and places in a co-ordinate unity, this action of perception that effects a unity as "presence" cannot also effect the division and re-attachment that (minimally) describes the signifying operation. To grasp something not present as present in its being signified through a sign undoubtedly involves the bodily operation of perception: signification still works through the body in the action of 'grasping' the signified (inhabiting its meaning, so to speak). Perception is

'enlisted' precisely for that 're-attachment' of signifier to signified. But to describe the perceptual grasp of something signified through a sign is not to account for the signifying operation; rather the description presupposes the division essential to what signification is, while the body in its unquestioning way 'takes up' the signifying operation.

Just as it is necessary that there be a break at its basis not itself perceived in order to adumbrate a perspective, so for signifying there has to be a break from the massive solidarity of a presence that synthesizes moments into an integral unity of time. The break has to be within the undivided field of presence (which *is* the non-conceptual action of the body) such that there can be signification of what is not present. But while Merleau-Ponty emphasized in invariably *spatial* terms the importance of the perspectival break, the opacity that instates it, and the subsequent limit and partial 'this-sidedness' to our point of view in perception, he simply assimilated the *temporal* break that signification requires to the spatial description as if they were the same. Not distinguishing the synaesthetic unity the body effects spatially in perceptual experience from the integral unity the body effects temporally, a distinction I emphasized in the previous chapter, supports conflating temporality and spatiality as if our body's particularity simultaneously adumbrates a perspective in space *and* time. The signifying division *within the experiential unity of presence* that the temporal break effects – most generally, between the present and the not-present, as the signifier-signified sides of the signifying operation respectively – is taken out of this unity and conflated to the break between perceptual presence and

the imperceptible opacity that is its condition. The difference between perception as the body's act of non-conceptually effecting an undivided unity of presence, and signifying as an act presupposing a division between what is present and what is not, is then lost. The consequences of losing this difference manifested in bad ambiguity which was to undermine Merleau-Ponty's entire project: the body proves capable of doing everything language and thinking were understood to do and the Cartesian mind-body dualism rather than being carried through reflectively and clarified instead collapses into an incoherent muddle.

Applying the corrective interpretation that keeps the need for expression in the foreground keeps language separate from the body. The signifying operation of language effects the otherwise-undivided distension of time over the duration of our existence into a division of past and present moments (and therefore by implication future moments). The division is not experienced as fragmenting or breaking up time as the body continues its non-conceptual work of giving us the experience of the world as a unity. The action of reflection as enabled by this division into temporal moments is to embody the unreflected past in an expression, which is to bring the body to bear on one's past and structure it relative to one's present perspective. The past is not something out of reach that has 'passed by', but 'lies behind' me such that I can turn around and find it open to me precisely because the opacity at its basis prevents its being closed off to me just as the opacity at the center of my present prevents my being closed off to the past. By the same token neither past nor present can be fixed relative to the other, but the past becomes the

setting for my freedom that I exercise in the present through an action that is always also expression. Conversely, my past constantly avails itself to me for my investigation and exploration, not as some objective setting I return to but as the existential tenor of my life that I am living, that I presently live: that *I can* reflect on the world is already to change it.

Merleau-Ponty claims reflecting is a "truly creative act" (p. x) which effects a "change in structure of our existence" (p. 62). Clearly the world is not changed in any objective sense, rather it is changed in the sense of 'qualified'. The capacity for reflection qualitatively alters a perceptual existence that is bound to the immediately present (as animals presumably are) into an expressive consciousness that has the whole range of temporality arrayed before it, constituted in possibility and actuality. In one and the same action the subject's freedom is realized, as the ambiguity of the world transforms into the possibility of different situations, as well as the subject's situatedness and dependence in history and ultimately, against an unsurpassable mystery, hidden within the contingency of the body.

Drawing implications: The idealization of personal agency

The previous chapter offered an exposition of Merleau-Ponty's primacy of perception thesis in terms of the structuring of experience into a phenomenal field that was realized as a richly differentiated, undivided unity of presence. In offering this exposition I argued that Merleau-Ponty had addressed the philosophical problem of unity through his emphasis on embodiment, which effected a shift of the premise for unity onto existential grounds such that the objectivist ideal of unity

(whether empiricist or transcendentalist) in terms of a full explicitation was shown to be impossible. The chapter concluded on recognizing that within the ambiguity of the body, the pre-personal subjectivity that realizes the phenomenal field, always through some individualized style acquired over time in interactions with others, is history.

This chapter aimed to clarify problems inherent in Merleau-Ponty's account that had been left out of the exposition. What Merleau-Ponty's account required was some way to assert a reflexive distinctiveness within the field so that the subject was not merely dissolved into the world as usual but rather gained the necessary distance or differentiation within an otherwise unbroken presence for some self-awareness. This reflexivity was achieved through breaking into the timelessness of immediate experience and temporalizing the unity of presence into differentiated moments. Central to this clarification was language and the recognition of the necessity of expression, which when applied to the bad ambiguity of Merleau-Ponty's discussions of thought, reflection, and time salvaged his best insights from confusion. In so doing the importance of history was consolidated and extended in terms of the perceptual field transforming into a field of extant expressive structures wherein the person is situated. And a second pole emerged as crucial, centered on the act of making explicit and drawing attention to the personal agency through which the implicit, pre-reflective, impersonal background is expressed. Merleau-Ponty calls this bi-polar conception the "concrete subject", which summarizes the ambiguity from which persons emerge as persons:

> ...the generality and the individuality of the subject, subjectively qualified and pure, the anonymity of the One and the anonymity of consciousness are not two conceptions of the subject between which philosophy has to choose, but two stages of a unique structure which is the concrete subject. (pp. 450-1)

What animates this structure and manifests it as both general and individual, anonymous and personal, is a body that proves indistinguishable from language within experience and which is above all an exertion of agency that can be either attributed to someone else's person or taken responsibility for in the first person. This notion of personal agency was implicit from the beginning in Merleau-Ponty's characterizing of perception as the embodied agency of the "I can", the action of the body as a non-conceptual power to move itself, grasp the world, and do things. Through expression this perceptual ability was extended into the "I can speak" and "I can reflect" and the world was decisively opened up to include the whole domain of the past, of possibilities, and of relations to others, through which the "I" comes to define and know itself. However this dominance over time, ranging over possibilities, and freedom in relation to others are not absolute but radically situated and dependent upon contingency, history, and ultimately on the opacity of that mystery at the heart of our existence. In articulating what I call *the idealization of personal agency* in this way, Merleau-Ponty focuses on the individual's inherence in history in terms of a passivity, experienced above all in a modality of feeling in need of explicitation, that signals a "new relation to truth".

I conclude this chapter drawing out some of the implications of this idealization of personal agency, for although I have been reading Merleau-Ponty through the

theme of unity what his philosophy accomplishes is a shifting of criteria away from epistemology to life such that he addresses the problem of unity (of Nature and Freedom, of objective world and subject) through addressing in a quintessentially existential manner the problem of the alienation of knowledge from life. The problem of Nature and Freedom are deferred to history and the individual, respectively, as these come together in the exercise of personal agency, and consequently addressing the problem of the Nature-Freedom division needs to be done through the perspective of the personal agent. To gain the proper significance of the implications of Merleau-Ponty's account for conceptualizing agency entails that the limits and conditions for this agency be ascertained and returns us again to the opacity and mystery that defines our existence in ambiguity, which we passively intimate and needs to be made explicit.

The difference between the world and my body within the world is a matter of perspective: I have a perspective on the world as an openness before me, while my body as both a vantage point (as a part or limit of the world, from which I perceive) and the basis of my power to grasp what is open to it proves an opaque recess not itself perceived. Only when my body loses its functioning on this side of my perspectival basis and becomes an object through pain, hunger, or some dysfunction of its power – as when one's leg falls asleep – does a part of my body revert to being a part of the world for me and I perceive it as a thing; the bloody hand at the end of my arm, the ache in my stomach, the unresponsive leg that betrays me when I stand. The opaque perspectival basis at the center of that world, within me,

interrupts an (hypothetical) otherwise absolute spatial unity through introducing a limit or break which is the very condition for realizing a perspective. Acknowledgment of this opacity – which is not to penetrate it or 'clarify' it, but the acknowledgment is more a confession of passivity – reveals on the other side of my bodily power an unsurpassable limit to my action.

An alternate manner of construing this difference between the world and my body in the world is in terms of willing versus feeling. In resisting my action the world does not impede my *exertion* of my will (it might be frustrated in achieving its designs, but not through any deficiency of its own), whereas the utmost exertion of my will is ineffectual against a recessive evading of an ungraspable that affords nothing at all. This ineffectualness of my will is not a deficiency but is rather an empty sense, a senseless effort, useless in a way best described as a passivity where I no longer will but feel. This does not make sense in conceptual terms. As Hegel pointed out, to think a limit is already to think beyond it and thus dissolve it as limit. However, if perceiving is non-conceptually embodied, *it does not think* its limits or conceive its divisions, but these limits and divisions – with all the potential for contradiction, paradox, and ambiguity this implies – are the basis for a unity of experience which realizes this unity as differentiated in a structured, intelligible way that makes the experience real and simultaneously establishes the conditions of possibility for extra-perceptual consciousness.

All my activity goes out into the world, which is both open to me and envelops me always, but no matter how profoundly I grasp this world, the opacity at the very basis of my acting recedes, and in this recessive sense *resists my grasp*. This resistance is to be contrasted with that of objects in the world. The world that envelops me is the setting for all my action, the space for the exercise of my agency, while within it are all its objects that stand over against me. The world as objective stuff, the world's things, can solicit my gaze, my motion, my action, precisely because they stop these; the world as *resistance to my action* sets the general conditions for the mutual definition of both it and myself. The world in resisting my action defines, or allows me to realize, my grasp of it. The opacity at the base of my perspective in resisting my grasp does so not through arresting it but through offering no-thing, through a receding and evading my action. This receding leaves me not with a perception of any-thing, but with the realization of a limit that is not experienced as such but which is a *reflexivity of feeling*, a sort of self-awareness *in passivity*. Merleau-Ponty has made it clear that this opacity is above all in the body as an opacity of time: the opacity of an unattainable past and of an imperceptible passage of time. Opacity resists my grasp not merely immediately and perceptually in the present moment, but in the body's providing the continuity over time necessary for reflection and temporality the opacity it harbors is the condition for my reflection and my identity even as it *resists reflection* and resists any sort of total retrospective capture or complete circumscription. There are no guarantees for knowledge, or explicitly, but rather my person emerges from a background of a history and a world founded in mystery. But the manner in which

this mystery is embodied, and therefore history and the world implicitly lived – in faith, trust, awe, wonder, and openness – affirms a significance deeper than what is explicitly known and valorizes the whole domain of life of perceiving, desiring, willing, and feeling that is first and foremost the non-rational relations that make up the social and historical world. These non-rational relations, of our faith and trust and openness to each other, to our past, to our tradition, but also of our love, hate, fidelity, spite, pride, shame, joy, envy, and so on, compose the stuff of our pre-personal existence, are enacted expressively through our social institutions, and bind us to our selves, others, and the world before any questioning or reflection ever takes place. Our selfhood as persons and our explicit knowledge as thinkers always necessarily presuppose this deeper significance, even as this significance is only ever made manifest to consciousness and known through persons making their implicitly lived existence explicit.

We come to know our existence, despite its being non-conceptual, upon reflection (transforming the unreflected into its explicit signification) on our life as implicitly lived through will, desire, and feeling within the world and in relation to others that solicit, frustrate, or satisfy, our actions. But this can only be the case if that non-conceptually lived life avails itself to our reflection (as the opacity at the base of our perspective that sustains the temporal continuity of our lives does not) in being already expressive. The unity of experience we implicitly live is richly differentiated and structured expressively not by a sole perceiver alone in the world, but through the relations of many persons each of whom perceive, will, desire, and

feel the world from perspectives that are ambiguously pre-personal and their own. In terms of the idealization of personal agency (which is the agency animating the "unique structure" of the "concrete subject" that is history and the individual) this expressive significance has the crucial implication of qualifying Merleau-Ponty's account of perception: in the end, language is constitutive of consciousness. Reflection or expressive consciousness, as established in our persons through our embodying of language, is the medium for the exercise of personal agency and qualitatively differentiates our existence into one that is open to history, to the future, and to others. As such, language is experientially enacted through our persons and is not to be understood objectively as some alien structure that stands over against the individual but as the living history and living social order through which our individual personhood is realized. The implication of Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy in terms of the idealization of personal agency, which as enacted by persons through language defines itself between the poles of history and the individual, addresses the problem of alienation through embodying knowledge within life. Embodiment as an ascription of human agency provides the basis for the human sciences. In the particular case of psychology, understanding human agency as personal demands that for psychology to develop into a genuine science of experience it proceed neither from a methodological, epistemological, nor disciplinary basis, but from the social order as we live and feel it through our persons, struggling to express its problems and its mystery.

Chapter 6. Psychology & the human sciences: The idealization of agency

From Enlightenment dream to a poetry of human relations

"Philosophy as a rigorous science? The dream is all dreamed out." Edmund Husserl

Merleau-Ponty says of institutions that "they have ceased to live when they show themselves incapable of carrying on a poetry of human relations" (1964a, p. 9). This beautiful conception is especially striking by way of contrast with the cynical notion of institutions as bureaucratic tyrannies obsessed with money that fetter creativity. Equally striking is Merleau-Ponty's generous definition of what can be considered an institution. "Speech is an institution" (1945/1962, p. 184) made up of "words, vowels and phonemes" that are "so many ways of 'singing' the world" (p. 187). "Feelings and passional conduct" are also "in reality institutions", as evident in the cultural variation of "the simultaneous patterning of body and world in emotion" that composes them (p. 189). Between my person as a particular ego and the world extending beyond the horizons I live, intercedes the whole domain of the social as institutionalized relational patterns organized through speech and feeling, expressive of an always-embodied human subjectivity, and carried through history. Both my person and the world, the first as a particular individual locus through articulation and a perspective on the world, and the second as the overarching background and unsurpassable setting for all possible perspectives, are configured relative to each other through the interpretive nexus of the interlocking social institutions that make up a 'culture', a 'society', or a 'history'. My first person perspective on life, as indeed my personhood, my identity, indeed the 'I' itself and

the very ascription 'my' that accompanies the 'I', emerges from an implicitly lived and felt immersion in that nexus wherein the organization of valuing, desiring, willing, suffering, and wondering is not explicitly differentiated as such. However, once articulation of this nexus begins, the organization of life through institutions that are necessarily social-relational shows itself as richly and complexly structured in a manner that unfolds in depth and intricacy. My bodily grasp of 'the world' is mediated through a particular social-cultural-historical nexus that lived me in a patterning of feeling, singing of the world, poetry of human relations, and all the mystery these orientations express, long before I ever spoke or thought of that peculiar entity I call 'my self'.

Merleau-Ponty means institution in precisely this broadened sense when he (1964a) claims that the mind "needs simpler activities in order to stabilize itself in durable institutions and to realize itself truly as mind" (p. 4). The central thrust of his effort has been to draw out the mind's inherence in the body. The latter proved ambiguous in that it is both pre-personal, as socialized and relational within an intersubjective context throughout the exercise of its agency, as well as personal, through the expressive acts of making explicit attributable to a speaking subject. The ambiguity is impossible to resolve; at best it gives way to an unsurpassable mystery at the heart of the body. Recognition of this mystery and acknowledgment of the dependence of the mind on its situation signal a new relation to truth centered on the subject's passivity that correlates experientially to the mystery on the hither side of the body. Passivity blocks the power of consciousness to either constitute the

mind as fully explicit or render knowledge fully determinate. This incapacitating of the power of subjectivity to fully circumscribe the object (whether through a synoptic ideal overlooking the unity of the system or through a cumulative ideal summing up to a totality) or in other words the demise of the ideal of objectivist thought, transforms these objectivist aspirations from being the very essence of reason into rather its presumption. Attention shifts from maximizing the accomplishments of reason to instead the emergence of reason from the nonrational conditions of life, the aim to complete an edifice of objectivity shifts to a focus instead on the means for objectifying thought and knowledge, and philosophy leaves off epistemological dreaming for a valorizing of existence.

From a personal perspective, the shift to existential criteria would seem to place a far greater burden on the equivocal range of feeling than it would seem capable of supporting. But that is to overlook the whole complexly structured pre-personal aspect of feeling as patterns and networks of social relationships institutionalized over time and lived through our bodies prior to our emergence as persons. It is true that from an exclusively first person point of view neither the nonrational conditions of life, nor the objectifying of life through expression, nor the particularities of our existence as lived and suffered in feeling appear to suffice for developing a philosophy, science, or any comparable edifice of thought to rival the great achievements made possible through the appeal to an objective ideal of knowledge. However the other half of the truth is that a point of view is a necessary condition for knowledge at all as the means of access to phenomena. The necessity

of a point of view is not exclusively a negative significance in restricting all possibilities to a particular perspectival configuration, for it is precisely this so-called 'restriction' that enables the exploration of possibilities and phenomena in the first place. To attempt to negate a point of view as if there could be a "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986) is to deny the agency presupposed in the very effort and through this contradiction betray the Reason that set the questioning of perspective into motion in the first place.

The apparent weakness of a first person point of view signals the necessity of an openness to other points of view, a recognition of the need to converse with others, and ultimately the realization that one's first person perspective emerged from the past of a pre-personal subjectivity such that taking things on faith, trust, fidelity, or in awe and wonder has its own unimpeachable validity. These are not overcome with the elaboration of knowledge but presupposed, incorporated, and affirmed; it is just that their manner of being taken up and lived as the embodied basis for knowledge renders their supporting role invisible. Nor does the formulation of knowledge and objectifying of thought rule out the risks and hazards attendant upon taking things on a faith in the world, a trust in others, and fidelity to one's pre-personal tradition. Rather this corollary of uncertainty attests to the inevitable underside of contingency that provides our nonrational relations and feeling life with their existential significance. Some element of responsible subjectivity, without any guarantee of fulfillment beyond its action, is required if faith, trust, and fidelity, or awe, wonder, and mystery, are to retain any meaning and not be merely

synonyms for a present ignorance to be surpassed in the future by a more penetrating analysis. Just as the domain of my personal existence cannot be fully circumscribed due to an opacity embodied at its center intimating a mystery on the hither side of experience and expressed through an insurmountable equivocation in ambiguity on this side, so too does the social domain upon which any personal agency asserts itself prove incapable of being fully objectified: "the social does not exist as a third person object" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. 362).

The shift to new, existential criteria of truth draws out the inherence of mind in the embodied domain of the social, relational, and affective aspects of existence that come to be stabilized in particular structures and patterns (institutions in Merleau-Ponty's broad sense). Along with this shift thought and knowledge are no longer adjudicated in terms of an objective ideal of a fully explicit thought or a fully determinate knowledge, and Husserl's dream of philosophy as phenomenology, that is as the most rigorous *Wissenschaft* that would ground all other knowledge and science, is all dreamed out. I have argued that this epistemological construal of the task of philosophy is a dream inherited from the Enlightenment, a dream motivated by the wish for a progressive and positive transformation of society as guided by the true light of Reason. Essential to this wish is knowledge conceived according to an ideal of objectivity as fully explicit and circumscribable, thus rendering Nature (including human nature) fully objectifiable. By implication knowledge could master life and society, otherwise dominated by the capriciousness of the desires, emotionalism, and prejudices of human existence, would be ordered so as to

maximally realize freedom, equality, and justice. But the dream *qua* dream has been dreamed out; knowledge proves incapable of mastering life without betraying the very Reason that grounds knowledge, and we find ourselves thrown back upon our existence. Nevertheless the impact of the Enlightenment has been of the greatest historical consequence in effecting the radical transformation of European and then American society into modernity. Our modern institutions have been erected on the ruins of a dream, and therefore insofar and for so long as we rely upon these institutions we continue to uphold this dream despite its ruin. As Merleau-Ponty (1960/1964c) puts it, "We are living on the leftovers of eighteenth-century thought, and it has to be reconstructed from top to bottom" (p. 348). The task of the human sciences is inseparable from a reconstruction of its institutional basis so as to transform the ruin of our Enlightened dream of knowledge into a poetry of human relations that we can live. This conception of the task of the human sciences is justified because, as I hope to have substantiated through the historical exposition of the first three chapters of this study, the spirit of critical inquiry essential to intellectual life, whether philosophy or science, is inseparable from our philosophy of education, the institutions that embody it, the society that supports it, and the culture which that education cultivates and promotes.

The primary means of expression of this Enlightenment dream has been the institutionalization of the modern disciplinary order of research. The modern research university as an institution (in the commonplace use of the term) embodies in its social organization of intellectual life the idealization of Nature at the center

of the Enlightenment dream. In this form the dream endures and continues to realize society along the lines of a continuous functional differentiation of social roles, an increasing specialization of knowledge, and an ongoing fragmentation of intellectual communities into self-contained monopolies on 'truth' implicitly and practically defined in the narrow sense of a field. While the positivist might view these institutionally-driven developments as progress, from an existential perspective they raise instead a new problem: the alienation of knowledge from life that manifests within our selves through the subordination of the full breadth of our implicitly lived existence, as willed and felt, social and relational, and as history, to the narrow scope of our explicit knowledge predicated upon some naturalistically-given truth. In their being established within the institutional sphere of disciplinarity all the human science disciplines, including psychology, inherit the problem of alienation as their very premise. The immediate consequence in the twentieth century has been noncommunicating specializations in place of dialogue and methodological expertise in place of trust.

The short history of psychology's institutionalization bears out the attribution of alienation; the discipline has been criticized in the harshest terms as pathological, deluded, and solipsistic. Merleau-Ponty's career as psychologist and philosopher can also be understood as a crusade against psychology as alienating. His first major work *The structure of behavior* (1942/1963) is a comprehensive criticism of the behaviorist viewpoint that dominated psychology's first half-century. The last article he saw published in his lifetime, "*Eye and Mind*" (in Merleau-Ponty, 1964a,

pp. 159-190), begins by taking aim in prescient fashion at operationalism and the newly emerging information processing approach that proves to dominate psychology's last half-century.

> Thinking "operationally" has become a sort of absolute artificialism, such as we see in the ideology of cybernetics, where human creations are derived from a natural information process, itself conceived on the model of human machines. If this kind of thinking were to extend its reign to man and history; if, pretending to ignore what we know of them through our own situations, it were to set out to construct man and history on the basis of a few abstract indices (as a decadent psychoanalysis and a decadent culturalism have done in the United States) – then, since man really becomes the *manipulandum* he takes himself to be, we enter into a cultural regimen where there is neither truth nor falsity concerning man and history, into a sleep, or a nightmare, from which there is no awakening. (p. 160)

Through its institutionalization, the dream of the Enlightenment has entrenched its innermost possibility, the alienation of knowledge from life through attempting to subordinate the latter to the former, and in so doing it becomes nightmare. Although Merleau-Ponty's rhetoric is rather inflated here – the unhistorical melodrama that "there is no awakening" from this nightmare seems overdrawn – and the temptation to move from despair to a truth claim should be resisted, he nevertheless has his finger on the pulse of the vital problem of alienation. Given the importance of institutions (in Merleau-Ponty's broad sense) as organizing the social-cultural-historical interpretive nexus through which I understand my self and the world, to address the problem of alienation raises the question of how to understand the disciplinary order within the research university (that is, as institutions in the usual narrower sense) as established upon the broader extant institutions of life the disciplines presuppose. In this study I have approached this question through the theme of disciplinarity, although I am well aware that here at its finish I have

provoked more questions than I have answered.[1] This was in part my intent, as I argue that the questions raised are good and necessary: how are these institutional edifices of science, education, and research, the work of human agency? What of our deepest ideals and truths do they aspire to realize? And to what extent do they in fact realize these aspirations?

Final thoughts on disciplinarity: Psychology's problem of alienation

The historical examination and articulation of the philosophical significance of disciplinarity occupied Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1 outlined the social and intellectual antecedents to the emergence of the disciplinary order of research, as these developed within the Enlightenment and which set philosophy the practical and epistemological problem of unity. Chapter 2 analyzed the emergence of the disciplinary order as a response to this problem and assessed this response as compounding the problem of unity with the new problem of the alienation of knowledge from life. The examination of the history of the emergence and consolidation of disciplinarity and the setting of the terms of its philosophical significance served two purposes: first to provide the context in which to situate critical assessments of psychology as a discipline, and second to orient the exposition of Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology as the exemplar of an appeal to experience. The former was the focus of Chapter 3, while the latter occupied Chapters 4 and 5. Given that the rationale underlying psychology's disciplinary independence is oppositional in regards to an adequate consideration of experience, there was necessarily a disjunction between the historical treatment of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 over against the exposition of an experientially-faithful

approach of Chapters 4 and 5. In fact the disjunction is so great the two sections may not be reconcilable at all, but in this respect the disjunction is nothing other than a faithful expression of the very real issue of the alienation of the discipline from life. My aim is not to reconcile these two sections but to sketch what would be required for their *potential* integration and in this way clarify psychology's constitutive problem of becoming a science of experience. I see this potential integration as realizing a historical possibility internal to the discipline that was implied by the numerous critiques of psychology as made evident in Chapter 3.

The crucial center of gravity that brings together the concerns that animate the Enlightenment is the ideal of freedom. The trio of related terms of nature, science, and secularization were all emphasized by the intellectual elite and presented to the influential social classes they cultivated as nontraditional sources of authority that legitimated progressive social change, above all that of freedom. In social-historical retrospect, the cultivation of a scientistic culture proves key in Britain and France to effecting changes within intellectual life such that there were broader social consequences outside the elite circles of the philosophers. This culture supported the free space of inquiry necessary for scholarship. Within this space of freedom, which operated outside the closed system of the corporate universities that were the traditional centers of study, intellectuals were buffered from the demands of either state interest or extra-scientistic societal interest. Sociologically speaking, this arrangement was successful in that it becomes institutionalized, but the success

proves short-lived as the institutions are unable to either sustain progressive inquiry or to effectively transform society.

Viewed intellectually in retrospect, the outcome of the successful cultivation of a broader scientistic culture and institutionalization of inquiry is a particular epistemological stance in relation to the world that idealizes Nature as neutrally contingent relations of forces. While the price paid for this modern conception of objectivity was a world disenchanted from an inherently-meaningful, cosmic status, the gain is in the radical freedom of a self-defining subjectivity. The index of the appeal of the idealization of Nature as a solution to the Enlightenment's problem of freedom is found in the progress and proliferation of scientific inquiry whenever suitable social conditions of inquiry are in place. However, this very success combined with the widespread social and political changes in Europe through industrialization, revolution, and reform instigated a crisis for philosophy of securing a practical and epistemological unity that addresses the divisions, schisms, and threat of fragmentation these present to knowledge and society. In nineteenth century Germany, the Enlightenment ideal of freedom fired the imaginations of philosophers, educators, and reformers as they attempted to integrate this ideal into their self-understanding and overcome the dilemma posed by its epistemology which seemed to irreparably split the unity of the cosmic order.

Unlike Britain and France, the sociopolitical patchwork of German states prevented the creation of a broad-based intellectual class capable of supporting a scientistic

culture that brings about an institutionalization of science. Instead, a more philosophically, apolitically cultural movement forms that understands science in idealized, anti-utilitarian terms. Change is effected through the state in a reform of the university system in which this philosophical culture takes active part, with research being granted freedom in-exchange for indirect control by the state through the power of appointment. A number of strands went into making up this university-centered philosophical culture defined by *Wissenschaft*: neohumanism, Kantian transcendentalism, idealism, Romanticism, and experimentalism. Taken together they can be interpreted as the collective historical response to the problem of unity. Within the newly minted faculty of *Wissenschaft*, a tension emerges between two centers of gravity that form from the confluence of these multiple strands. One center is that of an *expressivist idealization* of unity understood intellectually, spiritually, morally, or culturally, and the other is an *idealization of the field* which understands unity in primarily practical-instrumental terms as a problem of social organization of intellectual labor. Initiated by neohumanism and brought to its fulfillment by the experimentalists as the unforeseen productivity due to the latter's technical aspects colludes with bureaucratic criteria and administrative policy in enabling the experimental approach to dominate, the idealization of the field in favoring the specialization of knowledge into independent fields monopolized by particular research communities proves the definitive force in realizing the new disciplinary order.

Ironically the full effectiveness of experimentalism through its technical aspects is only realized due to the anti-utilitarian emphasis of *Wissenschaft* on moral grounds demanding a near spiritual devotion to research from the philosopher-as-researcher, which manifests in terms of the researcher's developing a *professional identity* with the community in relation to its field. Practically speaking, the historical outcome of the dominance of an idealization of the field is the strongest possible argument that only *communities* of intellectual inquiry rather than individuals can positively address the problem of unity. In terms of its epistemological outlook the idealization of the field is essentially continuous with the Enlightenment's idealization of Nature, and thus the disciplinary order of research that emerges within the German institutional infrastructure transposes the freedom of the self-defining subject to the research discipline that defines itself through establishing proprietary claims over a field. Individual researchers must affiliate with particular disciplines and become members of research communities within these disciplines to partake in this freedom, thus tying freedom to research at the individual level by means of a professional identity. The success of this emerging disciplinary order, which becomes world-renowned, depends on the unintended consequences of the collusion of the technical aspects of experimental science with bureaucratic state support in the context of a decentralized institutional market which enables an exploitation of the developing institutional infrastructure. The result is the formulation of research networks outside explicit state control or local university corporate control which pursue their own research interests to monopolize their

fields and propagate their own disciplines and in so doing indirectly serve state interest through the creation of a bureaucratic-administrative cultural reality.

Intellectually and socially however the problem of unity is compounded: increasing specialization exacerbates the fragmentation of the intellectual community into noncommunicating solitudes and distances knowledge from society. In the American context where an anti-utilitarian philosophical culture supportive of *Wissenschaft* as pure research is lacking what I take to be the constitutive problem set by the emergence of disciplinarity manifests: knowledge and the intellectual life in general through its institutionalization, organization, and specialization becomes effectively *alienated* from the broader stream of the social life of society, culture, history, and tradition.

In the United States the development of the disciplinary order, of expertise and specialization, and the need to gain freedom from the encroachment of extra-disciplinary societal or state interests were a tightly woven fabric, and consequently the gaining of psychology's disciplinary autonomy in twentieth century America has to be understood relative to societal pressures as it does not in nineteenth century Germany. In the pragmatic, progressivist context of the United States the demand for the usefulness of knowledge asserted itself in a way unknown in Germany, which for psychology manifested in its primary opposition coming not from philosophy but from the commonsense knowledge of everyday life. In order to compete successfully with commonsense, psychology needed a knowledge product

whose appearance of objectivity set it apart from and above everyday knowledge. The process of gaining independence for the discipline through processes of professionalization, pre-emption, specialization, and the monopolization of its field further accentuate those technical and naturalistic aspects of psychology's self-understanding in *methodological terms* that maximally promote those processes and insure an untouchable expertise (and in unintentional collusion with the state extend and consolidate the reach of bureaucratic-administrative cultural reality). Psychology's methodological self-conception can be interpreted as a *principle of selection* applied to its practical order of investigation that draws attention to exclusively those aspects of psychology's research practices that are non-threatening to its *disciplinary identity* so as to maintain the appearance of objectivity of its knowledge product. The experimental situation and the laboratory setting in which experiments take place have proven the context best suited for dealing with the threatening encounter between psychologist and subject. The other contact point where the everyday world poses a threat to the practical order of psychology is in attempts to apply psychological knowledge to life. The discipline's solution to the latter has been to extend its technical expertise into the everyday world through transforming the contexts of application to resemble the contexts of investigation wherein that expert knowledge was produced.

Evaluations of psychology that are critical of its exclusively self-referential, self-justifying perspective, point to the discipline as exemplifying the problem of alienation at an institutional level. Critics like Sigmund Koch and Kurt Danziger

characterize psychology as a cognitive pathology, a group delusion, or methodologically solipsistic and urge that psychologists open themselves to inter-disciplinary perspectives of the humanities and other social sciences. The positivist conception of science in epistemological terms of method has proven entirely inadequate for psychology, while the natural sciences, even richly and appropriately conceived, cannot serve as the model of science for psychology. The idealization of the field which entrenches a naturalistic conception of psychology's subject matter and an epistemological view of scientific research practice, allied with the institutional givenness of noncommunicating specialized disciplines, work together to support the formal characterization of science as method and conceal its social, historical, and institutional aspects. Psychology as alienated from life is given an epistemological, institutional, and formal seal of approval through understanding itself as a natural science and neglecting history.

The idealization of agency: Reconciling philosophy & the human sciences

Fundamental to integrating psychology's aspirations to a science of experience with an overcoming of its disciplinary orientation is recognition of its necessary reliance upon, and alliance with, philosophy. On the one hand, as Koch rightly claims, psychologists make decisions of inescapably philosophical cast about their subject matter, while on the other hand the discipline's institutional basis and its most deep-rooted premises, whether naturalistic or epistemological, are thoroughly philosophical; so psychology's recognition of its allegiance to philosophy is to acknowledge what has historically always been the case. But as this study has argued, to make explicit is never a neutral operation that leaves what was formerly

implicit unchanged. Articulation makes a difference. In this case, making explicit philosophy's essential role to a human science discipline like psychology immediately questions the radicalness and ultimately peculiarity of their division and by implication, the roots of their division in a shared institutional history of disciplinarity. This questioning applies to all the human sciences and ultimately brings out the division of crucial significance: that between life (the social order) on one side, and philosophy and the human sciences (the disciplinary order) on the other.

Merleau-Ponty's existential philosophy in aiming to restore the world of perception through an articulation of experience as an open stance to the world, in awe and wonder at its mystery, makes life as the social order explicit in terms of an idealization of agency. The idealization of agency articulates life at a philosophical level as a *horizon of evaluation* surrounding a central axis that runs between the two poles of agency, history and the individual.[2] In putting forward this idealization Merleau-Ponty addresses the problem of alienation through an original solution (in non-conceptual, experiential terms) to the problem of unity. He also provides a rich description of human agency, such that what in the human sciences has become polarized as the structure-agency debate (as if it is a matter of choosing sides) is reconstrued as rather an *irreducible tension* of foremost concern to the human sciences. It is of foremost concern because this tension is centered precisely on the problem of alienation, while its elucidation is constantly falling between the disciplinary cracks insofar as the specialization of knowledge and concomitant

monopolization of expertise in particular fields has fractured the broader horizon of evaluation. Within this horizon, it is not a case of independent fields claimed in exclusive proprietary fashion by autonomous research communities. Rather, there are numerous different manners in which agency can manifest – socially, politically, economically, aesthetically, and so on – each of which is situated in history.[3] This study has stressed *personal* agency because I am interpreting Merleau-Ponty's appeal to experience through a psychological interest: each human science articulates its own particular focus. As for the boundaries between them, these are as yet unfixed (if they can be fixed at all) and securing these boundaries is a matter of conversation and criticism among human scientists. Through this dialogue the limits and conditions of agency, in its manifold of aspects, can be ascertained and the boundaries to a particular human science relative to the others set. 'Discipline' would no longer be primarily the title for a fundamentally socio-economic grouping, but a fidelity to experience through skill in articulacy. 'Method' would lose its core significance as the safeguard of disciplinary identity as well as its overarching necessity: instead we take experience on trust and faith to reveal itself as already complexly structured and richly differentiated over history. And research 'identity' would no longer be exclusively to a particular discipline of expertise, but to a broader intellectual community whose privilege is to clarify and carry on what is best and noblest of the tradition. Asking the human scientist to identify with the intellectual tradition of which he or she is part rather than with their particular discipline is to raise the historical question of which has better served the broader tradition and the social order, to what ends, and within what

horizon of evaluation of the good, the true, and the beautiful. The intellectual community is essential to life and the social order in serving to express what are its deepest problems and concerns and to articulate its richest values and aspirations. Philosophy has to take responsibility not for life, but for helping to make explicit what of life is best, and most worth living.

For psychology, the appeal to experience configured through the idealization of personal agency is an appeal to the first person to explore the good ambiguity I live. Psychology is the study of the person, a science in the first person. At its center is the tension between my explicit consciousness of my self and others, and the whole interpersonal domain of the social order that I implicitly live. But this very distinction within my person between the implicit and explicit divides experience, such that, just as phenomenology broke apart upon its confrontation with language, the appeal to experience breaks up and diverges in multiple directions. There is neither a privileged consciousness outside language that lets the investigator through some method, evidence, or mode of subjectivity bypass the hazards of speech, history or relationship, nor by the same token can a consciousness outside language be denied (as was made evident and presupposed in the notion of "agency") that would reduce speech, history, or our relations to the status of objects. While the implications of the former led to the dissolution of phenomenology into modalities of experience situated in history, Merleau-Ponty's recognition of the latter valorized the personal subject in terms of a non-conceptual power and assured that our necessary reliance on the pre-personal nonrational

conditions of life that we take up and incorporate into our knowledge are not a prison or a fate, but rather "we are condemned to meaning" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962, p. xix). We find our way to knowledge through language not as some objective force over against us, but as the very social order that is the font of our questions, and always in reliance upon and in responsibility to others. Against this background, psychology is set the task of determining the extent of personal agency through a clarification of our inherence in a willing and feeling, valorizing and suffering, that was not personal to begin with and which unfolds in depth and complexity via our relations to others. Psychology has to articulate notions of the individual, person, self, ego, and the I with distinctness and perspicuity, relative to the social-cultural-historical order from which the person emerges; an order articulated by the other human sciences.[4] But these articulations have no ultimate guarantee or status beyond the quality of the insight they make explicit, as judged by peers and posterity. We follow our own lights: our knowledge claims in the human sciences cannot escape history or the world to some domain of objective truth but are gestures of trust displayed to others and expressions of faith in a world which circumscribes us even as, in the end, this world, others, and our selves prove bound together in an opacity at the human heart impossible to penetrate through reflection, impossible to render explicit; something beyond that feeling only intimates. What remains for the philosopher, the human scientist, or the psychologist, beside the truth we make explicit or the love we express? Only the existential recognition of our passivity in the face of all we do not and cannot know: that we live a Mystery, and this Mystery lives us.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The figure for the APA membership is taken from Leahey's (2004) quote of 159,000 members in the year 2000 (p. 510).

2. Koch's critical writings are scattered throughout numerous articles, introductions, and epilogues, written between 1959 and 1992. As the majority of these are conveniently collected in Koch's (1999) *Psychology in human context: essays in dissidence and reconstruction* (a posthumously published volume edited by David Finkelman and Frank Kessel) I have restricted all my citations to this volume, with the disadvantage being that obtaining the original dating for citations would require some laborious reconstruction.

3. To merely provide an incomplete list of the names of prominent philosophers who were engaged in this debate and note that none fully agreed with any other should be sufficient to make this point: Brentano in Vienna, Dilthey and Stumpf in Berlin, Wundt in Leipzig, Külpe and his followers that make up "the Würzburg school", the neo-Kantians Cohen, Natorp, Windelband, and Rickert in Marburg, Ebbinghaus in Wroctaw & Berlin, Husserl in Heidelberg, Georg Müller in Göttingen, and so on.

4. I am indebted to Steven Turner for his critical comments on this point, which corrected my overemphasis on the continuity between the German and American contexts.

5. Trying to gain a sense of the significance of 'disciplinarity' entails the difficulty on the one hand of struggling against extant disciplinary divisions, such as the separation of social history from intellectual history which seems primarily justified by the division of labor between sociology, history, and philosophy. On the other hand, the theory-practice distinction is also insidious here, although it presumably owes more to the sort of utilitarian philosophy that justifies disciplinarity than to the disciplinary order itself. Clearly I reject a distinction between theory and practice and perceive philosophy as expressive of societal practices, in the sense of articulating those issues of 'deep concern' to the social-historical order (for more on this point see Taylor, 1985b, Ch. 3).

6. Taylor (1975) acknowledges this multiplicity of accounts, but reduces them to "two seemingly indispensable images" through extensive interpretive efforts so as to maximally elucidate Hegel's philosophy.

7. The usual index for growth is the cotton industry; for example, More (2000, p. 7) cites the following figures: 1750: 1.0 million kgs.; 1800: 23.2 million kgs.; 1850: 265.0 million kgs. The topic of the Industrial Revolution, its description and explanation, has become a research industry of its own for historians. The

authoritative work appears to be Landes (1969); for a recent brief introduction to the topic I consulted More (2000).

8. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers one definition of institute as follows "A society or organization instituted to promote some literary, scientific, artistic, professional, or educational object." It confirms in its etymological note the intimate linkage, within its specific historical setting, between the character of science as the revolutionary foundation for a new society, literally embodied in the notion of an institution, and the themes of progress, knowledge, and education: "Apparently at first repr. F. *institut*, the name given to the institution (*Institut National des Sciences et des Arts*) created in France in 1795, to replace the old academies which had been suppressed at the Revolution... Thence applied in Great Britain to associations or institutions having somewhat similar aims (though none of them with the comprehensive character and organization of the French Institute)... Also applied to local institutions for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, by lectures, reading-rooms, libraries, educational classes, etc.". See also Im Hof (1994).

9. I understand Taylor's description of the ancient conception in terms of the constitutive problem of legitimating the authority of tradition as rooted in a religious conception of the world. The ancients respond with an idealization of the cosmos that affirms a cosmic unity in terms of a hierarchical order of meaning and in this way justifies traditional authority structures. This idealization, which following Augustine lasts a millenium, in turn gives way – or 'causes' or 'creates', if the terms are understood in their broadest historical sense – to the constitutive problem of freedom which defines the Enlightenment.

10. The American Revolution could be added here too, as the influence of the Enlightenment, particularly of Locke, on the founding fathers, the Declaration of Independence, and the American Constitution are well-known.

Chapter 2

1. The competitive and insular creation of disciplinary specializations that tended to be centered around individual charismatic founders with their followers (or later with the American graduate schools, around research groups in laboratories), suggests that the historiography of research since the 1830s could be best undertaken in terms of "research generations", each generation setting the paradigms to be overthrown by the next. A genealogy of this pattern of paradigm-setting and overthrow would trace the formation of a discipline in terms of its Oedipal lineage. For psychology this begins with, as Danziger (1990) aptly names it, the "positivist repudiation of Wundt", mainly by his American students. This understanding also makes sense of Ben-David's (1971) claim that "The professionalization of science yields its best results in the second or third generation" (p. 89) as they reap the clearing and seeding of the field by the first generation.

2. The English word "scientist", as opposed to natural philosopher or gentleman of scientist, was coined in 1833 by William Whewell at the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Nye, 1996, p. 13).

3. The position of *Privatdozent* was meant to handle the imperfections of fit between qualification and employment; the researcher could teach and continue to research while awaiting appointment. The imperfections of the system do indeed show up at this juncture, with the ever-increasing numbers of unemployed or underpaid *dozenten* a constant problem for the German system (Ash, 1997).

4. Both the neohumanist and experimentalist strands as antagonistic to idealist philosophy and its universal claims also offer philosophical corollaries to their specializing orientations that are anathema to any aspiration to unity in their denial of universals: historicism and naturalism (Mandelbaum, 1971). As for the suggestion that 1830 marks 'the end of philosophy', figures like Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dilthey would all seem to be heralds of an entirely different, post-1830 intellectual orientation: the existential and life-philosophies of the nineteenth century. I read the significance of this new orientation, following the concluding arguments made in Chapter 1 (pp. 36-40), to mean that the problem of unity had been driven underground and a new, more immediately pressing problem had shouldered its way onto the scene. This compounds the problem of unity with a new problem, that of the alienation of knowledge from life. Putting the problem in terms of alienation raises the person into view as it is in one's person that the distinction between knowledge and life is made, and therefore where their estrangement acutely felt. Emphasis shifts from the epistemological preoccupation with getting the Nature/Freedom relation right to instead understanding the individual's inherence in society and history.

5. The argument of the next two paragraphs relies heavily upon the work of Polanyi (1946/1964; 1958; 1969) and its extension by Ravetz (1971), as well as more generally on work in science studies, particularly Latour (1983; 1984/1988) and Latour & Woolgar (1979), which I see as fleshing out Ben-David's sociological history.

6. The references cited in the previous note 5 are applicable to this point as well.

7. The last claim seems borne out by Germany's success in science dwindling in a manner analogous to the British and French pattern. This is based on two observations: first, the fact that the high period for German research ends by the 1870s, coinciding with Bismarck's final unification of Germany by 1871 (Ben-David, 1971, p. 125). Second, that post-1871 there is more state support for scientific research than ever before, with a prodigious growth in institutes, associations, societies, etc., sponsored by the state. But the support does not result in a corresponding resurgence of German domination of science; perhaps because

increased state *support* translates into increased state *control* (see Manicas, 1987, p. 200).

8. Growth is not straightforwardly an index of excellence but is rather determined economically by the possibilities of the academic market, which in the German case reaches its saturation point by World War I (McClelland, 1980, Ch. 7) when the constraints and imperfections of the system as a whole manifest themselves (Ash, 1997; Noble, 1979).

9. This development is really for the first time in history, Baconian rhetoric and earlier and later positivist ideology aside (for an excellent discussion of this prevalent misconception, see Manicas, 1987, pp. 200-7). The possibility of realizing technical applications manifests in the chemical industries first (primarily in synthetics, for agricultural applications and also particularly dye-stuffs) and in electrical industry second, with the former playing a crucial role in a unified Germany's meteoric rise in global economics, politics, and prestige in the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (Haber, 1971; Noble, 1979; Reardon, 1992).

10. Herbst (1965), whose historical focus is 1876-1914, claims that American philologists and historians base their innovation of the seminar on the natural science laboratory (p. 37). Diehl (1978), who focuses on the period from 1770-1870 and emphasizes in particular Wolf's role in philology and his usage of the seminar, writes: "The concept of research most emphatically does not stem from the natural sciences, however" (p. 42). Turner (1980) backs this up with his claim that it was Boeckh's philology seminar "founded at Berlin in 1810, [that] became the model for those of the nineteenth century" (p. 88).

Chapter 3

1. Every conventional history of psychology emphasizes the experimental precedents and context to Wundt's founding of the Leipzig laboratory. The names of Helmholtz, du Bois-Reymond, Brücke, Müller, Fechner, Weber, are mandatory; an account of Helmholtz' and company's materialist oath – "some say in their own blood" (Hergenhahn, 1997, p. 208) – and of the work on the nervous system, the transfer of physics principles to physiology, the "discovery" of psychophysical laws, and so on, are invariably recounted. Consequently I am passing over this complex and crucial period in a mere sentence and using conventional adjectives such as positivist, mechanist, and materialist, not because this period or what these references represent are unimportant but on the assumption that it is 'common knowledge' as outlined in every standard textbook.

2. The German émigré to Harvard Hugo Münsterberg represents, ironically, the interest in psychology's application and popularization better and earlier than probably any other psychologist in its history. Hale (1980) describes him as psychology's "most aggressive publicist" (p. x), and his career was certainly a

sustained attempt at bringing psychology to the attention of every sphere of society; he was influential in organizing the famous St. Louis Congress of 1904, and was involved in an extraordinary range of meetings and interactions from debunking spiritualism in the name of science to advocating experimental methods of ascertaining truth in law courts. Astonishingly productive (Kuklick (1977) notes that "when he died at fifty-three, he had written thirty-one books, an average of two a year for the last ten years of his life" (p. 197)), Münsterberg applied psychology to law, business, education, industry, the legal system, the entertainment industry, to name only a few. A brief glance at some titles of his books makes the point as to his attempt to extend psychology's influence: *Psychotherapy; On the Witness Stand; Psychology and Industrial Efficiency; Business Psychology; The Photoplay: A Psychological Study;* and perhaps most telling, *Psychology and Life*. For discussions of Münsterberg see Hale (1980); Kuklick (1977, pp. 196-214).

3. Danziger (1990) makes especially salient psychologists' connections to the educational system, particularly in intelligence testing (for the history of the latter, see Fancher, 1985). Testing was extended most famously with the psychologists' forays into the army, with Yerkes leading the way in World War I with testing for 'mental type' and Likert developing his scale for testing 'personality type' in World War II. Other (in)famous applications extend from screening for immigrants (Goddard), assessing genius (Terman), special needs in education (Binet), to the infamous Hawthorn experiment.

4. The best examples of the latter have been brought out in retrospective studies of Yerkes testing for mental type of the Army in WWI, a case discussed later in this chapter. McClelland (1973) makes the case very clearly and succinctly in discussing the circular nature of validity with regards to intelligence testing in schools.

Chapter 4

1. Merleau-Ponty moves explicitly into metaphysics and ontology. This was his stated intention in programmatic statements such as his letter to Martial Gueroult (1964a, pp. 3-11), his last published article "Eye and mind" (1964a, pp. 159-190), and most explicitly brought out in the posthumously published *The visible and the invisible* (1964/1968) – for example, his claim that "what one might consider to be "psychology" (*Phenomenology of perception*) is in fact ontology" (p. 176).

2. There is no doubt Kant is second only to Husserl in importance for Merleau-Ponty's early work. In the *Phenomenology of perception* there are forty-six references to Kant and fifty-two to Husserl; by comparison Sartre warrants only seventeen references and Heidegger eighteen (fourteen of which occur in one chapter, *Temporality*). For the best comparative examination of Merleau-Ponty's work to Kant, see Langan's (1966) *Merleau-Ponty's critique of reason*, wherein the argument is structured around the claim that the development evident over Merleau-Ponty's writings parallels that of Kant's three critiques. This is not due to any

imitation but because "the development they reveal is impelled by the same internal necessity implicit in both philosophers' transcendental starting points" (p. viii). A good case could be made for subsuming Merleau-Ponty's work entirely within the Kantian transcendental project on the one hand, or on the other for Merleau-Ponty transforming the project decisively enough that he leaves it behind. While I favor the latter, I understand the peculiar manner in which Merleau-Ponty transforms the project to be in terms of 'shifting the criteria' (from epistemological to existential) that he accomplishes precisely through working entirely within the Kantian project. However, in resisting the temptation to take to Kant's high-altitude thinking (the *a prioris*, the categories, the architectonics) that *analyzes* human subjectivity as mind, Merleau-Ponty remains on the ground long enough for the multiple modalities of consciousness he explores to reveal themselves as *embodying* human subjectivity in its objectifying itself and reflectively returning to itself, such that Kant's need to take to the air is obviated and the need to offer an account of mind and the new metaphysics it would ground subordinated to an exploration of our social, political, historical, relational, and emotional existence.

3. Merleau-Ponty's radicalization of phenomenology, at least my reading of his rejection of the transcendental for the existential, is best justified in terms of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Husserl in *The visible and the invisible*. (This manner of interpreting Merleau-Ponty occupies much of Chapter Five.) I argue his early, apparently liberal reading of Husserl and Husserlian phenomenology is insupportable, especially if one compares something like the *Preface* to *Phenomenology of Perception* to his later work. In the *Preface*, he mentions a number of disjunctive readings of phenomenology that he characterizes as contradictions (1945/1962, p. vii) which block interpreting Husserl as idealist – idealists clear up contradictions – and instead provide evidence for Husserlian phenomenology as in fact existential in its orientation (which has some evidence in Husserl's (1954/1970b) willingness to use the adjective existential at the crucial points in the *Crisis*). Merleau-Ponty interprets the ambiguity of Husserl's so-called contradictions in a spirit of self-serving generosity: that is in terms of Merleau-Ponty's own project and understanding rather than in terms of a careful interpretation of Husserl's oeuvre. (Examples of Merleau-Ponty's more careful interpretations of Husserl are contained in numerous articles in *Signs* (1960/1964c).) I interpret the *Preface* as insightful into Merleau-Ponty's position precisely for its 'existentially prejudiced' misreading of Husserlian phenomenology, in much the same way that Merleau-Ponty attributes citations to Husserl that are not to be found in the texts (Spiegelberg, 1982, pp. 580-1n2)! Merleau-Ponty's false attributions to Husserl that "transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity" (1945/1962, p. xiii, and throughout Merleau-Ponty's writing), and of "*sich einstromen*" (also repeatedly throughout Merleau-Ponty's work) are favored by Merleau-Ponty and subsequently unequivocally indicate Merleau-Ponty's reading (I am not suggesting, nor do I believe, that these misattributions were intentional; rather they owe their creation in no small part to the difficult circumstances under which Merleau-Ponty accessed the manuscripts at the Husserl Archives in Louvain (see Van Breda, 1992). On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty himself indicates on

occasion, especially in *Phenomenology and the sciences of man* (1964a, pp. 43-95), that he is going beyond Husserl. Merleau-Ponty, following Heidegger's notion, interprets the "unthought element" in Husserl as precisely what is most essential and he justifies his interpretation in these terms. "In presenting the matter as I have, I am pushing Husserl further than he wished to go himself. ...Nevertheless his notion ...contains in germ the consequence that I have just drawn from it." (p. 72). "I believe that the logic of things ought to have led Husserl to admit..." (p.75). "In other words, Husserl was really seeking, largely unknown to himself..." (p. 77). In this light, it is telling that he interprets Husserl more carefully in several articles in *Signs* (1960/1964c); and that he most explicitly rejects a number of Husserlian notions (eidetic intuition, essences) and the whole phenomenological project in *The visible and the invisible* (1964/1968) (cf. Spiegelberg (1982, pp. 578-9) where he discusses Merleau-Ponty as the "most outspoken critique of Husserl's conception of eidetic intuition").

4. Merleau-Ponty overinterprets Husserl in his own favour, as "intending" this all along; he reads an implication into Husserl's work and attributes a criterial shift in Husserl that 'follows' from the latter's radicalizing – but it is a shift that Merleau-Ponty follows whereas Husserl perseveres with the previous criteria. Thus Merleau-Ponty interprets the lifeworld as meaning a turn to intersubjectivity, dialogue, and communication with others, while Husserl continues to talk of an absolute self-evident apodictic grounding of the sciences in the transcendental ego.

5. Some caution is appropriate here as Merleau-Ponty utilizes the dialectic in a number of additional, and as far as I can tell irreconcilable, senses. Clearly his use of dialectic in his phenomenological work is different than in his Marxist analyses. I argue that to understand his style of writing as a conceptually corrective dialectic is both a sound interpretation of his intent as well as a necessary interpretive heuristic to apply to his work, so as to avoid falsely ascribing contradictions to a thinker who already presents interpretive difficulties in explicitly espousing certain contradictions! He uses dialectic in a number of unexplicated ways in *The structure of behavior* (1942/1963), for example in moving from the parts to the whole that make up a Gestalt. Whereas by the time of *The visible and the invisible* (1964/1968) he prefers reversibility and chiasm to dialectic, which he may or may not have given up entirely (for an excellent discussion of Merleau-Ponty's dialectic, see Edie (1987)).

6. My emphasis on mystery suggests that I am interpreting Merleau-Ponty as heavily, if not decisively, influenced by Gabriel Marcel. This is the case. In a 1959 article Merleau-Ponty (1992, pp. 129-139) discusses Marcel's influence favorably, citing the latter's distinction between a mystery and a problem as crucial to his own development, in terms of philosophy as a "new style of thinking" defined by its confrontation with mystery as an "engagement" that cannot be viewed objectively as a problem but the philosopher "is rather caught up in the matter". Merleau-Ponty then goes on to say: "If you think about this, you can see that, after all, what is expressed here in an abstract and general way was broached by my earlier

examination of the sensible world [i.e. *The structure of behavior* and *Phenomenology of perception*]. For it is precisely in the sensible world that we recognize such a strange sort of knowledge" (p. 133). For Merleau-Ponty, mystery infuses the entire everyday world as evident in our perceptual experience. In this regard Merleau-Ponty's 1936 review of Marcel's *Being & Having* is also of interest (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 101-107).

7. Merleau-Ponty notes that "an action or a human thought" is "by its very nature" "a first person operation" (p. 348). But his concern is not with what mode of discourse psychology should adopt as appropriate for its scientific development, rather with blocking individualistic or representationalist interpretations of this "very nature". For Merleau-Ponty what "is precisely the question" is "how can consciousness which, by its nature, and as self-knowledge, is in the mode of the I, be grasped in the mode of Thou, and through this, in the world of the 'One'?" (p. 348).

8. Merleau-Ponty's opponent throughout his work on the primacy of perception is conceptual thought and the overemphasis on ideation, not language as such. The numerous contrasts Merleau-Ponty draws between reflective and pre-reflective, or between intentionality of acts of judgment and operational intentionality, invariably describe the latter using *textual* metaphors; for example, "my consciousness wordlessly intends... an original text". Perception would seem to be above all a *reading* of the world. In *The structure of behavior* (1942/1963), see pp. 92, 167, 169, 185, 202, & 211; in *Phenomenology of perception* (1945/1962), see pp. viii, ix, xv, xviii, & xx.

9. There is no doubt that Merleau-Ponty unapologetically privileges the visual, perhaps because it enables the furthest spatial reach of any of the sensory modalities. In his defense, the argument could be made that any 'figure' can interchangeably be the end of visual, sonorous, gustatory, tactile, perception. I think it is clear throughout his exposition that he intends one's whole body in terms of a synaesthetic unity of sensory modalities integrated in action. Conversely, the criticism can be made that privileging modalities other than the visual would bring out alternatives that Merleau-Ponty's visual emphasis conceals, and his aesthetic sense can justifiably be criticized as overly visual. I also think this overprivileging of the visual is a fundamental contributor to his problem with language (discussed in Chapter Five). If he emphasized speech as aural, for example, as Herder (1966) does in his justly famous 1770 "Essay on the origin of language", he may have been led to a very different exposition.

10. Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the world as a perceptual style reiterates the influence of Marcel in the background, whose notion of mystery Merleau-Ponty interpreted as above all a "new style of thinking" definitive of philosophy. See this chapter's note 6 above.

11. Merleau-Ponty's descriptive technique is insightful here: in every instance it is not a matter of using the pathology to reconstruct the normal case, but of demonstrating through extensive description of 'the normal case' how it is that the pathology necessarily presupposes 'the normal case' such that it can be *understood* as abnormal at all.

12. Merleau-Ponty defines metaphysics from a purely existential perspective that rejects any sort of disengagement from our inherence, our subjectivity, our contingency. None of the latter are susceptible of proof, so to reject a disengagement from them is to radically shift the emphasis away from questions of proof. Any claims to absoluteness or purity amounts to a disengagement from existence and simultaneously bring the philosopher out of a genuinely metaphysical stance. Merleau-Ponty (1948/1964b) writes: "Metaphysics begins the moment when, ceasing to live in the evidence of the object... we apperceive the radical subjectivity of all our experience as inseparable from its truth value." (p. 93). And, "Metaphysics is not a construction of concepts by which we try to make our paradoxes less noticeable but is the experience we have of these paradoxes in all situations of personal and collective history and the actions which, by assuming them, transform them into reason" (p. 96). See Merleau-Ponty (1948/1964b, pp. 83-98).

13. Kant's transcendental move decisively raised the standard to a new level for what a philosophical account of unity would need to address. The nineteenth century would seem to be dominated by attempts to meet this need, although with the exception of the idealists, rarely with the same depth or quality that Kant achieved. In this light, the impact of Hegel's idealist system, which culminates in a *Science of logic* (1812/1969) as well as the exaltation and praise (perhaps puzzling in retrospect) of J. S. Mill's *Outline of a system of logic* (1843/1891) appear perfectly comprehensible (cf. Taylor, 1975, pp. 3-126, for a detailed outline of the problem of unity as raised and addressed by Kant, Hegel, and their contemporaries). Numerous other movements in the 19th century support this interpretation as well: the naturalists are drawn to Spencer's social evolutionism and then the extraordinary impact of Darwin; others elaborate the system-building of positivists like Comte, Saint-Simon, and Fourier (cf. Manuel, 1962), whereas for the traditional and the dogmatic metaphysicians there is a revival of Aristotelianism. The preoccupation seems to engender an equally wide-spread rejection of the aspirations to unity and/or system: the radical individual in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche's nihilism, and by the turn of the twentieth century, the reductionist variants of psychologism and sociologism, or mechanism or materialism, all would seem to be best understood against this background (see Ermarth, 1978, pp. 15-90; Kusch, 1995; Mandelbaum, 1971; Ringer, 1969).

Chapter 5

1. The characterization of phenomenology as a positivism is originally Husserl's (cf. *Ideas*, I; 1913/1982, p. 38). My thanks to Robert Burch for this reference.

2. A measure of the extent to which these problems occupy him and lead him to revise his thought is his abandoning of a number of major projects, *Transcendental man, The origin of truth* (1964a, p. 3) and *Introduction to the prose of the world* (1964a, p. 9). (A version of the last was published posthumously (1969/1973c).) These difficulties must also be closely tied, in ways difficult to untangle as they contribute to the problems as well as reflect them, to the more personal difficulties he encounters in the 1950s. At a personal level, presumably the death of his mother in 1952 (Moran, 2000, p. 399) impacted Merleau tremendously (his father had passed away when he was only five), a view with strong support if Sartre's (1964/1965, pp. 208-9) portrayal of their relation is accurate. At the political level, Sartre (1964/1965) claims that "For Merleau-Ponty, as for many others, 1950 was the crucial year" (p. 275). Foucault (1989) comments that he belonged "to a generation of people for whom the horizon of reflection was defined by Husserl in a general way, Sartre more precisely and Merleau-Ponty even more precisely. It's clear that around 1950-55, for reasons that are equally political, ideological, and scientific, and very difficult to straighten out, this horizon toppled for us" (p. 41). The political difficulties for Merleau-Ponty were in terms of his Marxist views, relationships, and disillusionment over the Soviet Union upon the discovery of the camps and the Korean war, as well as his increasing dissociation from *Les temps modernes* and eventual estrangement from Sartre (see Sartre, 1964/1965, pp. 225-326). My speculation is that his personal problems and diminished practical and political involvements drive the complexity of his thought and convolutions of his prose to new and dizzying heights (as evident in the tortured abstractions matched to genuine insights of his writing, always presented with an extraordinary intensity), with all the risks of paralyzing inertia, voluptuous self-deception, and eroticized despair attendant upon such vertiginous intellectualism. His breaking from Marxism and confrontations with Sartre manifest in unusually lengthy meditations on politics, history, and dialectic that are unbelievably complex; (see esp. Merleau-Ponty, 1955/1973a, pp. 95-202; 1960/1964c, pp. 3-35; 1964/1968, pp. 50-104). Sartre (1964/1965) says, insightfully as always, "When someone leaves the marginal zone of the Communist Party, they have to go somewhere. They walk for a while, and suddenly find themselves on the Right. Merleau never committed this treason. When he was dismissed, he took refuge in his inner life." (p. 273). Moran (2000) offers support for this latter interpretation, saying that "after 1956 he became a recluse, only leaving home to go to the Collège de France" (p. 399). This attribution of refuge-taking "in his inner life" to someone who emphasized "there is no inner man", that "I am wholly outside myself", "I am from the start outside myself and open to the world", and completed his *magnum opus* quoting St. Exupery's "man is nothing but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him" (1945/1962, p. xi; p. 456) would seem to encapsulate the paradoxes Merleau-Ponty not merely expressed in his philosophy, but also suffered in his life. (For the only biographical information other than Sartre's memorial article cited above that I have been able to find, see Moran, 2000, pp. 391-401.)

3. After 1945 Merleau-Ponty devotes more and more attention to broader social themes of history, politics, literature, and language, with his work on perception serving as the springboard for these studies. Much of this work is published in newspapers, magazines, journals, and of course in *Les temps modernes* (for a complete bibliography of Merleau-Ponty's primary sources see Rabil, 1967, pp. 301-9). Politically, he develops his unorthodox Marxism primarily in terms of a philosophy of history, in *Humanism and terror* (1947/1969), and *Adventures of the dialectic* (1955/1973a). His increasing interest in language, partly due to his discovery of Saussure around 1947 and especially evident in his re-reading of Husserl on exactly this theme, is clearest in his 1952 articles "Indirect language and the voices of silence" and "On the phenomenology of language" (both in *Signs* (1960/1964c)). I consider these two pieces, along with his 1951 article "The philosopher and sociology" (in *Signs* (1960/1964c)) exploring the relations of phenomenology to the human sciences and among the human sciences themselves, and his 1952 letter to Martial Gueroult (cited in Chapter 4), as his best work. The *publication* years 1951-2 have a dual significance: their writing would have preceded his mother's death (see previous note 2) as well as his appointment to the Chair of Philosophy (formerly Bergson's) at the Collège de France, both of which occurred in 1952.

4. Merleau-Ponty's final, unfinished work, published posthumously as *The visible and the invisible* along with his working notes (1964/1968), poses a difficult interpretive problem in terms of how to incorporate its scattered, dense, disorganized, and unrevised material into an 'oeuvre reading'. One is not even sure whether he would have chosen to publish or discard it! What is certain, however, is that it is not an elaboration of entirely new themes or setting forth in new directions so much as a return or arguably – this is my interpretation – a regression, to his early work in order to deepen, clarify, and correct his initial theses. I have been utilizing it primarily as a companion to the *Phenomenology of perception*, in the sense of making explicit the latter's subtext and presuppositions. Understood in this way, three fundamental differences between the two works are of note: one, his increasing appreciation of language that characterizes much of his publications throughout the 1950s (collected in *Signs* (1960/1964c)) is most explicitly present, especially clear in various self-criticisms in his working notes. Two, he no longer has the anchor of a Marxist philosophy of history as he had in the 1940s (most evident in his prolonged critique and abandonment of dialectic); a difficult, complex, and provocative but unsatisfactory aesthesiological thesis takes its place. Three, his radicalization of phenomenology dramatically reveals his desire to supercede the tradition, to the point where, as I stated in Chapter 4, it arguably cannot be considered phenomenological anymore. Evidence for this can be found in his abandoning of traditional phenomenological terms in favor of numerous neologisms, such as 'negintuition', 'chiasm', or 'flesh' on the one hand, to his most pronounced criticism of Husserlian themes, for example in arguing against essences, on the other (1964/1968, p. 112).

5. I say "promotes" because in many ways Merleau-Ponty is not in opposition to Descartes (in fact on most occasions he cites him respectfully and sympathetically), but to the Cartesian tradition he founds, which reifies Descartes' terms and hypostatizes the mind-body dualism into a doctrine, and which in idealism overstates the power of thought. Merleau-Ponty does not consider Descartes' view as wrong so much as incomplete, and the mistake of his followers is to venerate his reflections rather than carry them through. See Merleau-Ponty, 1960/1964c, pp. 149-51.

6. Merleau-Ponty's position on the relation of nature to culture is, not surprisingly, dialectical. He does not want to do away with either term, nor does he want to collapse them together as if they were the same. Instead, he claims that "Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were... through a genius of ambiguity that might serve to define man" (1945/1962, p. 189).

7. Merleau-Ponty (1992, pp.129-139) in reflecting upon his own development states that "two influences, and only two, were dominant [in 1930], and that the first of these was much more important: the key philosophical thought of the epoch in France had been that of Léon Brunschvicg." Merleau-Ponty continues: "We became acquainted with Kant and Descartes through Brunschvicg, which is to say that this philosophy principally consisted of a reflexive endeavour, a return to the self. ...what he had to teach us as a philosopher nearly always consisted of a Cartesian reflection ...his essential contribution consisted precisely in informing us that we must turn toward the mind ...but that lengthy philosophical descriptions or explications cannot be made of this mind" (p. 130).

8. This reasoning reveals in germ Merleau-Ponty's denial of the possibility of 'the same' and of essences, as elaborated in his later work. It is also insightful in relation to his accusation (in a 1960 interview; Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 2-13) of Marx as "in error" because Marx "believed" that history as the combination of matter and spirit "was headed toward non-contradiction or identity" (p.10).

9. It should not be overlooked that Merleau-Ponty's first appointment to the Institut of Psychology at the Sorbonne in 1949 was in Child Psychology & Pedagogy, that he had an intense interest in the developmental psychology of language, and that one of the more famous courses he held, from which the citation in the text is taken, was entitled "Language and the acquisition of consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/1973b). As well, it is clear from *The visible and the invisible's* "Working Notes" that the acquisition of consciousness, or transformation of existence to consciousness through expression, is not simply one problem, it is *the* problem for Merleau-Ponty. For example "What is to be elucidated: it is the upheaval that speech introduces in pre-linguistic Being. ...it brings a ferment of transformation: what is this ferment? This praxis-thought? Is it the same being that perceives and that speaks? Impossible that it not be the same. And if it is the same, is this not to re-establish... the *Cogito*[?]" (1964/1968, p. 202).

10. In a sense Merleau-Ponty never gives up on this way of finding the manner in which higher-order behaviors are 'prefigured' in the body. His most notable notion of this prefiguring which has garnered much attention is in his descriptions of one hand touching another as a sort of reflection wherein passivity/activity, subject/object divisions have the least purchase. For a full list of citations of this theme in Merleau-Ponty's work, see Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 185n29.

11. It is enlightening to discover in *The visible and the invisible's* "Working Notes" Merleau-Ponty's (1964/1968) comment on the *Phenomenology of perception* that "my chapter on the *Cogito* is not connected with the chapter on speech... There remains the problem of the passage from the perceptual meaning to the language meaning, from behavior to thematization" (p. 176).

12. The implication of this claim is that reason is ultimately rooted in our feeling life, which will presumably alarm many more philosophers over and above the epistemological malingerers. On the other hand the claim also returns to the Greek philosophical articulation of the primacy of *eros*, as well as the Christian conception of love leading knowledge, as in I Corinthians 13.

13. Many of the examples Merleau-Ponty explores throughout the *Phenomenology of perception* are precisely those moments when the body breaks down in aphasia, agnosia, and so on. His reiterated point is that in making sense of the dysfunction from the point of view of the disabled person, consciousness is always maintained as an experiential unity and therefore the dysfunction manifests as a depression in the person's functioning as a whole. When the same behaviors are viewed from the outside by an ably functioning observer who integrates them at a higher level of functioning they appear fragmented.

14. To offer a minimal suggestion as to what these contributions might be: language qualifies consciousness temporally through dividing the present from the past, and therefore opened up to the future, by means of signs that can denote what is otherwise absent (and as concurrently qualified by embodiment as unity, experience becomes reflective). Imagination qualifies consciousness symbolically through dividing possibility from actuality (and as concurrently qualified by embodiment as unity, experience becomes fantastic). The analytic capacity of conceptual thinking as a modality of consciousness to abstract the distinctiveness of each contribution from its embodied unity into an idea, is itself divisive (and as concurrently qualified by embodiment as unity, experience becomes thought). Perceptual examples are fit illustrations of embodiment as undivided unity; mathematical examples are fit illustrations of logic as conceptual relations; dream examples are fit illustrations of desire as affective expression; literary examples are fit illustrations of language as creative expression; political examples are fit illustrations of society as power relations; and so on indefinitely. None of these are foundational in any absolute sense. Any of these could be understood as foundational to all the others if one asks the right question. Most precisely, all concurrently have to be understood as 'the foundation' – Wilhelm Dilthey's favored term "nexus" seems most apposite here

(see Ermarth, 1978) – and claims issuing that favor any one modality would always have to allow for correction by recognizing the contributions from all the others.

15. Merleau-Ponty's concluding paragraph to his 1957-8 lectures on "Husserl's concept of nature" begins: "One in fact must guard against the danger of a restoration of a naturalist philosophy" (1992, p. 168). Of course, in inimitably Merleau-Pontean fashion, he quickly qualifies that "The natural attitude is not false, and through it philosophy begins." But precisely because it begins there, in order to remain philosophy it must not remain 'there', that is, must not remain naturalistic. Interestingly O'Neill (1970, pp. 20-35) based on the *Preface* to *Phenomenology of perception* argues that Merleau-Ponty is undertaking a phenomenology in the natural attitude, although what he seems to intend by the phrase is that "Merleau-Ponty's conception of phenomenology is rooted in a philosophy of life and nature" (p. 27).

16. See Chapter 4, note 8.

17. I have offered some motivation for the puzzling issue of why Merleau-Ponty does not seem to see the need for expression in crucial passages despite emphasizing it in other passages: the challenge of overcoming his Cartesian tradition has led him to overcompensate for the Cartesian privilege accorded to thought with an equal and opposite overemphasis on the body. I have also offered an interpretive explanation for Merleau-Ponty's difficulty: the internal logic to his perception thesis works against recognizing a break within the unity of presence effected non-conceptually through the body. To these I can add a third piece: prior to his discovery of Saussure in 1946-7, Merleau-Ponty did not have a way to conceptualize language as an experiential unity in linguistic terms, with his Husserlian-inspired phenomenology not providing sufficient analytic ammunition to address the complexities of language. Saussure's diacritical notion of the meaning of language in terms of a system of differences provides Merleau-Ponty with a powerful insight for conceptualizing language as a unity that he proceeds to graft onto his phenomenological exposition of perception as embodied. Those articles wherein he 'grafts' Saussure onto his phenomenological exposition are mostly collected in *Signs* (1960/1964c; see Chapter 5, note 3) and have become assumed in *The visible and the invisible* (1964/1968).

Chapter 6

1. I adduce some indirect evidence for the pervasiveness of this problem from other quarters. One is the recent spate of critiques and laments of the modern university initiated by Allan Bloom's (1987) publication of *The closing of the American mind*, with titles like *The moral collapse of the university* (Wilshire, 1990), *In the company of scholars: The struggle for the soul of higher education* (Getman, 1992), *The university in ruins* (Readings, 1996), and *The making of the modern university: Intellectual transformation and the marginalization of morality* (Reuben, 1996). The center of attention is the university as educational institution caught between

the roles of research factory and ostensible intellectual center. Another trend has been the accelerating shift of the university towards corporatization, the control of research interest through funding, and the patenting of knowledge (e.g. Etzowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997; Kaplan & Levine, 1997; Slaughter, 1997). Again the university as an ambivalent educational institution serves as the battleground, and again the tension is between conflicting conceptions of knowledge; on the one hand as a product of the research industry versus knowledge on the other hand as a social and spiritual good. A third trend (which includes this study) is the growing interest across disciplines in exploring their own disciplinary roots, their discipline's emergence in the nineteenth century, and the processes of institutionalization that form the discipline's development (e.g. Danziger, 1990; 1997; Haskell, 1977; Kuklick, 1990; Ricci, 1984; Ross, 1991; Wolfe, 1989). A fourth area is the odd discrepancy between an explosion in historical and sociological studies of science on the heels of the Popper-Kuhn debate and the almost complete lack of such interest in the psychology of science (cf. Gholson et. al., 1989). I attribute this discrepancy primarily to psychology's incapacity to provide a rich account of agency; an argument I make elsewhere (Peet, 2002).

2. I understand 'existential philosophy' in this broad sense as encompassing the majority of the best philosophy since 1830 and extending into contemporary postmodernism. Clearly many of the nineteenth century philosophies of life, of the will, and of the individual are existential in this sense (see Chapter 2, note 4). The concern with nonrational modalities of experience that mediate between the individual and history and which form the basis for objectification and particular discourses captures, it seems to me, the focus not only of those philosophers traditionally called existential (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Jaspers) but also numerous others. Most versions of Marxism, such as the Frankfurt school with its concern with alienation would clearly fall within the category. Others include: Habermas' and Karl-Otto Apel's theory of communicative action, as based upon the notion of a "performative contradiction" (i.e., a contradiction between propositional statement and non-propositional life); Foucault's interest in the limit-experiences of madness, sexuality, criminality, and so on; Derrida's and Levinas' concerns with otherness, relationality, the "gift" of death or time; feminism's concern with gendered existence, relationship, situatedness, and perspective ("standpoint epistemology"); the entire psychoanalytic orientation. While put this way the characterization may seem too broad to be useful, on the other hand it seems like a virtue to read some unity into this broad swath of theorizing, not least because the existential orientation stands over against the dominant orientations of positivism (which is not so much a philosophy but a rationalization of technology) and pragmatism (which is rather a socially and politically conservative opinion in search of a philosophy).

3. Upon addressing (or not) the problems of unity and alienation, historicism looms on the horizon of the idealization of agency as the next constitutive problem for philosophy and a fundamental concern for the human sciences. As my exposition of Merleau-Ponty was directed to his phenomenological-existential philosophy, I

neglected his other side, that is his philosophy of history as he outlines in terms of highly original (albeit presumably influenced strongly by Kojève's interpretation) and anti-dogmatic Marxism, outlined primarily in *Humanism and terror* (1947/1969), and *Adventures of the dialectic* (1955/1973a). Any exposition of Merleau-Ponty claiming to be comprehensive (rather than merely faithful) would have to address the relations between his philosophy of history and his existential view.

4. For example, the notion that the self is the idealization of the I; that my person is my explicit sense of my self erected upon my individuality, which following Merleau-Ponty's intriguing notion, is an individuality that is both pre-personal and social-cultural-historical in a style "my" body learned before I ever came to call my body mine or my person a self, and so on. This type of articulation aimed at clarifying basic concepts holds for each human science relative to their foci and concerns; for example, notions of culture, society, ethnicity, the people, the folk, the state, the nation, a country, and so on are ambiguous and overlapping in such a way that sociology, anthropology, and political science have an interest in elucidating and differentiating. (An activity on their part in which psychology should take an interest, too, as all of these bear in more or less nontrivial ways on the question of, among others, personal identity.)

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